

Profession of Faith

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Foreword

In His mercy, the eternal and immeasurable great God has graciously turned to us, fallen human beings. He has made known to us the plan of His eternal redemption through the Holy Scripture. Because of His holiness and our sinfulness, we are called to approach the Bible and its teachings with humility and godliness.

Wouldn't it be sufficient to rely on the Word of God itself as our statement of faith? Why do we need a separate confession? Our faith should be solely based on the Holy Scriptures. However, the Scripture itself advises us that every Christian should have a clear understanding of its teachings for the strengthening of their faith and to testify to the world. In the face of arbitrary interpretations of Christian beliefs, it is very important to us to summarize in a few brief statements what the Bible presents as the pillars and foundations of truth (2 Timothy 1:13).

May every reader of this confession gain complete clarity about the nature of God and His glorious gospel, with the help of the biblical passages. Additionally, they should understand which faith the ARCHE stands for and which irrefutable values and truths are important to us.

*Pastor Wolfgang Wegert
in December 2008*

I. The Holy Scriptures

The living God reveals Himself to all people in general through creation.¹ In it, every reasonable person can recognize, through reflection, that behind everything there is an eternal and almighty God², so that no one has an excuse.³

However, God reveals Himself in a special way through the Holy Scriptures, also known as the Bible, so that people can not only gain general knowledge of God but also salvation and eternal life. We believe that the Bible is literally inspired⁴ by the Holy Spirit and is, therefore, God's infallible Word, as it was also written through the human nature of its writers. It consists of the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, whose texts may only be interpreted in their context and the context of the Bible as a whole. It is completely sufficient; nothing needs to be added or taken away. All confessions, theological convictions, and messages formulated by people, churches, or congregations must be examined in the light of the whole Bible.

Holy Scripture is the binding norm and guideline for the entire Christian life in terms of doctrine and practice. It is also spiritual food for believers and, therefore, needs to be read, studied, and applied to life every day so that they may become wise for salvation through faith, which is in Jesus Christ.⁵

¹ Psalms 19:1

² Romans 1:19-20

³ Romans 1:20+32; 2:1

⁴ 2 Timothy 3:16

⁵ 2 Timothy 3:15

2. The Triune God

We confess the one, only⁶ true and almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth.⁷ He is eternal Spirit⁸ and exists through Himself⁹ in absolute independence¹⁰. He is perfect in holiness, justice, truth, and love and does not change. Although there is only one God, whose absolute essence cannot be divided, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit must nevertheless be distinguished as three persons¹¹. The Father is from no one; He is neither begotten nor born. The Son, however, was begotten of the Father from eternity and proceeded from Him.¹² The Holy Spirit, in turn, proceeds from both the Father and the Son¹³. All three are God in themselves, and yet not three Gods, but one, who can only be comprehended by Himself.

3. The Counsel of God

God has freely and unchangeably determined¹⁴ in Himself from all eternity, by the perfect, wise, and holy counsel of His own will, everything that ever happens, including matters related to sin, but in such a way that He is neither its author nor in any way responsible for it.¹⁵ Through this predestination of all things, no force is imposed on anyone; rather, it is pre-

⁶ Deuteronomy 4:35

⁷ Deuteronomy 4:19; Isaiah 45:18

⁸ John 4:24

⁹ John 5:26

¹⁰ Acts 17:25

¹¹ Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14

¹² John 1:14+18; 3:16

¹³ John 15:26; 16:7; Galatians 4:6

¹⁴ Isaiah 14:24+26-27; 46:10; Proverbs 19:21; 16:9; Daniel 4:35; Ephesians 1:11; Hebrews 6:17; Luke 12:7; 21:18

¹⁵ James 1:13-14; 1 John 1:5; Numbers 23:19

cisely through the freedom of human decision that God's eternal purpose is fulfilled.¹⁶ His foreknowledge is therefore not merely based on the fact that He knows what will happen, but on the fact that He has decided it from eternity.¹⁷

4. Creation

To reveal Himself, His eternal power, wisdom, goodness, and honor,¹⁸ God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit¹⁹—created the world and everything in it within six days²⁰, both visible and invisible²¹. After God had made all other creatures, He created man and woman, not equal in design but equal in value, both in the image of God,²² in righteousness and holiness without sin. They were created to live forever in His fellowship for the glory of their Creator and to rule the earth.²³ God gave them His commandment to preserve the glory of paradise. They were enabled to keep it, but with the possibility of transgressing it, being left to the freedom of their own will.²⁴

¹⁶ Acts 4:27-28; John 19:11; Acts 2:23

¹⁷ Acts 2:23

¹⁸ Romans 1:20

¹⁹ Genesis 1:1-2; John 1:2-3; Hebrews 1:2

²⁰ Genesis 1:31

²¹ Colossians 1:16

²² Genesis 1:27

²³ Genesis 1:28

²⁴ Genesis 3:6

5. The Providence of God

To carry out His eternal counsel, God sustains, guides, and governs all creatures, actions, and events²⁵—from the greatest to the smallest²⁶—through His perfect, wise, and holy providence²⁷. For example, a person does not die as a result of illness or an accident, but because of God's will²⁸. The overriding cause of all humanly willed, unwanted, accidental, or natural law events is ultimately always God's providence²⁹. Through it, He arranges all things down to the last detail in such a way that nothing else can develop except the punctual fulfillment of His purposes in salvation history and the perfection of His saints. As believers, we are therefore not subject to the free play of people, spiritual powers, coincidences, or forces of nature, but only to the wise providence of Divine Providence, which serves us exclusively for the best³⁰, so there is no reason to quarrel with people, circumstances, or God.³¹

6. Fallen Man

Despite the glorious blessings of Paradise, the first humans were not prepared to thank God and live to the glory of their Creator. Instead, they preferred to follow Satan's seduction and break God's holy commandment.³² God allowed this to come about in accordance with His eternal

²⁵ Colossians 1:17; Psalms 135:6; Proverbs 16:9; Psalms 103:19; Acts 17:28; 1 Timothy 6:15

²⁶ Matthew 6:26-30; 10:29-31

²⁷ Isaiah 45:9; Proverbs 16:33; Amos 3:6; Isaiah 45:7

²⁸ Psalms 31:14-15; Job 14:5; Psalms 39:3-4

²⁹ Genesis 45:8; John 19:11; Proverbs 16:4

³⁰ Romans 8:28; Ephesians 5:20

³¹ Lamentations 3:34-39

³² Genesis 3:13+17; 2 Corinthians 11:3

counsel to create something even better for the glory of His name in salvific history.³³

Still fully responsible for the intrusion of sin, man lost the most essential elements of his likeness to God,³⁴ so that he was no longer pure, holy, innocent, and righteous; and therefore remains to this day under God's wrath, eternal death, and damnation.³⁵

Through Adam, the head of the human race, all of humanity is corrupted by sin³⁶ and therefore also guilty before God.³⁷ Due to this corruption of his nature, every human being is so spiritually dead³⁸ that he hates what is divinely good and loves everything that is evil.³⁹ As a result, he transgresses God's law every day and is subject to all misery.

7. Election and the Covenant of Grace

The distance between God and man is so immeasurably great that the Almighty is under no obligation to him,⁴⁰ even if man were to fulfill all his obligations to God.⁴¹ That is why God's devotion is never out of obligation, but out of a voluntary humility. It was also the reason for God's covenant of grace,⁴² which He established after man had brought himself

³³ Romans 11:32-36; 2 Samuel 23:29; 16:10

³⁴ Romans 3:12+23; 7:18; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10

³⁵ John 3:36; 2 Peter 3:7

³⁶ Romans 5:12+19; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22; Psalms 51:5; Job 14:4

³⁷ Romans 3:19

³⁸ Ephesians 2:1-3+5; Colossians 2:13

³⁹ Matthew 7:17-18; Romans 3:10-12; 7:18; 8:7; 1 Corinthians 2:14

⁴⁰ Psalms 113:4-6; Deuteronomy 32:4, 39; 2 Samuel 10:12; Isaiah 46:9; Psalms 50:21; 97:9

⁴¹ 1 Chronicles 29:14; Job 22:2-3; Luke 17:10; Romans 11:35

⁴² Hebrews 8:10-13; 10:15-17; Ephesians 2:12-13; Hebrews 9:15

under condemnation through the all. This covenant is already visible in the Old Testament but is fully revealed in the Gospel.⁴³ It is based on the covenant that existed between the Father and the Son concerning the salvation of the elect from eternity.⁴⁴ Through the covenant of grace, sinners are offered salvation and eternal life in Jesus Christ, and those who are destined for it and are therefore made willing and able to believe through the Holy Spirit,⁴⁵ joyfully grasp it through the required faith.⁴⁶

8. The Responsibility of Man

The doctrine of God's sovereignty, namely that He also guides all thoughts, words, and actions of people, and the doctrine of man's responsibility, must both be kept separate and each must be fully believed as divine truth without limiting each other. Even when these two doctrines seem to contradict each other due to the limitations of human logic. Therefore, every human being, whether believer or unbeliever, is fully responsible for his own actions⁴⁷. It is not possible to shift responsibility to any circumstances, other people, or even to God and His predestination⁴⁸. This is why people are called not to close themselves off from God⁴⁹, but to seek God⁵⁰, to repent, and to believe in the gospel⁵¹. This is also why the

⁴³ Romans 16:25-27; Ephesians 3:5

⁴⁴ John 17:9+24; Ephesians 1:3-11; 2 Timothy 1:9

⁴⁵ Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 6:44+65

⁴⁶ John 3:16; Romans 10:9; Galatians 3:11

⁴⁷ Deuteronomy 30:15; Matthew 23:37; 25, 1ff; Romans 2:5; Galatians 6:7

⁴⁸ Romans 2:1; James 1:13-15

⁴⁹ Hebrews 3:15

⁵⁰ Amos 5:4; Jeremiah 29:13-14; Acts 17:27

⁵¹ Mark 1:15; Acts 2:40; 14:15; 16:31; 2 Corinthians 5:20

church of Jesus is called upon to proclaim the gospel to all people without exception⁵².

9. Jesus Christ

The following are some important confessions about the person of Jesus Christ, which are intended to describe the mystery of His nature, His uniqueness, and His absolute key role in world and salvific history.

The Son of God – Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God⁵³, from eternity⁵⁴ the second person of the Trinity.⁵⁵ He is uncreated⁵⁶, of one essence with the Father⁵⁷, and true God⁵⁸, to whom full honor and worship are due.⁵⁹ He is the reflection of the glory of the Father,⁶⁰ who created the world through Him⁶¹ and through whom all things are sustained and governed.⁶²

The Mediator – It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to appoint⁶³ the Lord Jesus Christ as the sole Mediator between God and men⁶⁴ according to the eternal covenant⁶⁵, so that He might be the head of His

⁵² Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18

⁵³ Matthew 16:16

⁵⁴ Colossians 1:17; Revelations 1:17

⁵⁵ I Corinthians 8:6; I Timothy 2:5

⁵⁶ John 8:58; Hebrews 1:7-8; 7:3

⁵⁷ Hebrews 1:3

⁵⁸ John 1:1; Hebräer 1:8+9; John 20:28; Romans 9:5; I John 5:20

⁵⁹ Matthew 2:11; 14:33; Revelations 5:8-14

⁶⁰ Hebrews 1:3

⁶¹ Hebrews 1:2

⁶² Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3

⁶³ Hebrews 5:4-5

⁶⁴ Isaiah 42:1; I Peter 1:20-21; I Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 12:24; 7:22; John 3:16

⁶⁵ See “The Covenant of Grace“, Article 7

church⁶⁶, which was given to Him before all things began, that He might redeem, sanctify, and glorify it.⁶⁷

True God and True Man – In the fullness of time, Jesus Christ took on human nature⁶⁸ by being conceived by the Father through the Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.⁶⁹ As a result, He shared the same weaknesses as we do, but without sin.⁷⁰ Although He voluntarily⁷¹ became fully human, He nevertheless remained fully God.⁷² This constitutes the uniqueness of His person, in which divine and human nature are united, yet not half and half, but distinct and unmixed, so that He is fully and completely true God and at the same time fully and completely true man.⁷³

The Redeemer – Through this dual nature of His divine and human being, the prerequisite was fulfilled in Jesus Christ to carry out the mediatorial office.⁷⁴ He was also anointed and filled with the Holy Spirit like no other.⁷⁵ Thus, He had the power to be under the law despite His weakness and to fulfill it in full obedience.⁷⁶ In his sinlessness, He was worthy to be our assurance, who took our sins upon Himself,⁷⁷ under the most bitter suffering in His body⁷⁸ and agony in His soul,⁷⁹ and endured

⁶⁶ Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18

⁶⁷ Isaiah 53:10; John 17:6; Romans 8:30

⁶⁸ John 1:1+14; 1 John 5:20; Galatians 4:4

⁶⁹ Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:27+31+35

⁷⁰ Hebrews 2:14+16-17; Romans 8:3; Hebrews 4:15

⁷¹ Psalms 40:7-8; Hebrews 10:5-11; John 10:18; Philippians 2:8

⁷² Luke 1:35; Colossians 2:9; Romans 9:5

⁷³ Romans 1:3-4; 9:5; 1 Timothy 2:5

⁷⁴ Acts 10:38; Hebrews 12:24; 7:22

⁷⁵ Psalms 45:7; Acts 10:38; John 3:34

⁷⁶ Galatians 4:4; Matthew 3:15; 5:17; Philippians 2:8

⁷⁷ Galatians 3:13; Isaiah 53:4-6; 1 Peter 3:18

⁷⁸ Matthew 26-27 (the Passion story; please read)

⁷⁹ Matthew 26:37-38; Luke 22:44; Matthew 27:46

the wrath of God on our behalf until His death on the cross.⁸⁰

In this way, He became a sure and effective Savior for all those⁸¹ who, according to God's purpose and grace, take hold of their salvation.⁸² They are all Christ's inalienable property, His sure possession, and eternal inheritance.⁸³

On the third day, He rose from the dead⁸⁴ with the same body in which He suffered,⁸⁵ and with it He ascended into heaven, where He sits at the right hand of the Father⁸⁶ and prays for us.⁸⁷

10. Conversion and Effectual Calling

Since every human being is spiritually dead due to sin and thus absolutely unreceptive to God's message of salvation,⁸⁸ it takes a sovereign divine intervention to bring a sinner from death to life.⁸⁹ Therefore, God sends His Holy Spirit⁹⁰ to raise His elect to divine life at His appointed and pleasing time.⁹¹ In doing so, He opens their eyes to the state of their lostness⁹² and makes them willing from the heart, through repentance and faith, to turn to Christ their Savior.⁹³ This supernatural process in a per-

⁸⁰ Philippians 2:8

⁸¹ Romans 5:19; Hebrews 9:14; 10:12+14; Romans 3:25-26

⁸² Ephesians 1:11+13; Hebrews 9:15; John 6:37+39

⁸³ Isaiah 53:10-12; John 17:6; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9

⁸⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; John 20:25+27 (Jesus after the resurrection in His transfigured body)

⁸⁵ Acts 2:23-24+27; 13:37

⁸⁶ Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11

⁸⁷ Romans 8:34; Hebrews 9:24; 7:25

⁸⁸ Ephesians 2:1-3

⁸⁹ Ephesians 2:4-5+8-9; 2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 9:11; Titus 3:4-5

⁹⁰ Ezekiel 36:26-27

⁹¹ 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:5; John 5:25; Ezekiel 36:26

⁹² Acts 26:18

⁹³ John 6:37; Jeremiah 31:18; Deuteronomy 30:6; Philippians 2:13

son's heart is a new creation miracle of God, which the Bible also refers to as "being born again."⁹⁴ Through such a conversion, people are effectively drawn to Christ, but in such a way that they come completely voluntarily, as they have been made to want it themselves by His grace.⁹⁵

I I. Human Freedom of Will

In his state of innocence in Paradise, man possessed the freedom and ability to will and do what is pleasing to God.⁹⁶ However, he was not bound to this, so he could fall away from it.⁹⁷

After his fall into the state of sin, man retained the freedom and ability to act according to his own choice in the affairs of natural life.⁹⁸ With regard to the spiritual things associated with salvation, however, man has lost all volitional capacity to choose spiritual good. This means that the natural man is fundamentally averse to the divine due to his fallen nature⁹⁹ and therefore does not have the will or the strength to convert.¹⁰⁰

However, when the living God places a sinner in the state of grace through conversion, He frees him from the drivenness to sin and bondage of sin¹⁰¹ and makes him capable of freely wanting and doing what is spiritually good,¹⁰² so that he joyfully converts to Christ.

Because of the corruption that still remains in him, the will of a regenerated person is not exclusively inclined toward spiritual good, but to

⁹⁴ John 3:3-8

⁹⁵ Psalms 110:3; Song of Solomon 1:4

⁹⁶ Ecclesiastes 7:29; Genesis 1:26

⁹⁷ Genesis 2:16-17; 3:6

⁹⁸ Matthew 17:12; James 1:14; Deuteronomy 30:19

⁹⁹ Ephesians 2:1+5; Romans 8:7

¹⁰⁰ John 6:44+65; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Titus 3:3-5

¹⁰¹ Colossians 1:13; John 8:34+36

¹⁰² Philippians 2:13; Romans 6:18+22

a certain extent, he also wants evil.¹⁰³ Only in the state of perfection and glory will man's power of discernment be so unclouded that he wills and does only and exclusively the divine good.¹⁰⁴

12. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force, energy, or influence; He is God, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead,¹⁰⁵ who has been working on earth in various ways since creation. At Pentecost, however, He appeared on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ¹⁰⁶ to reveal the gospel in the world and to apply it to the hearts of people.¹⁰⁷

The Baptism of the Spirit – Since all people are "dead in their sins,"¹⁰⁸ they cannot recognize and accept Christ as their Savior.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, the Holy Spirit pours¹¹⁰ into the elect so that they are born again¹¹¹ and converted.

In contrast to John's baptism¹¹² with water, this reception of the gift¹¹³ of the Holy Spirit for salvation can also be called the Baptism of the Spirit or the Baptism of fire. For through the Holy Spirit, we are baptized into one body and filled with one Spirit,¹¹⁴ whereby we become members

¹⁰³ Romans 7:15+18+19+21+23

¹⁰⁴ Ephesians 4:13; 1 John 3:2; Hebrews 12:23

¹⁰⁵ Acts 5:3-4; see also "The Triune God", Article 2

¹⁰⁶ John 16:7

¹⁰⁷ John 16:8-13

¹⁰⁸ Ephesians 2:1; 2:5

¹⁰⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:14

¹¹⁰ Romans 5:5; Matthew 3:11

¹¹¹ See "The Rebirth", Article 9

¹¹² Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16

¹¹³ Acts 2:38

¹¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:13

of the body of Christ.¹¹⁵ “Contrastly, Christians repeatedly receive a baptism of the Spirit to equip them for their ministry.”¹¹⁶ For we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit again and again.¹¹⁷

The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit – After the Holy Spirit fills a person's heart at rebirth, He remains in them¹¹⁸ and continues to transform their character into the nature of Christ.¹¹⁹ This enables the person to pursue sanctification, bring forth the fruits of the Spirit,¹²⁰ and ultimately persevere to the end through the indwelling Holy Spirit.¹²¹ Without this lasting inner activity of the Holy Spirit, no one can see the Lord.¹²²

The Spiritual Gifts –Through the new birth, every believer has become a member of the body of Christ.¹²³ Just as every member in the natural body has a function and task, every Christian has also received gifts, according to his disposition,¹²⁴ for ministry through the Holy Spirit at the time of their salvation.

The Bible uses lists of examples¹²⁵ to show us the inexhaustible abundance of gifts of grace (charisms). There are gifts for practical,¹²⁶ spiri-

¹¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:18

¹¹⁶ Luke 3:22; Luke 4:1; Acts 1:8; 4:8; 7:55; 8:17; 9:17; 13:3-4; 19:6; Romans 15:19

¹¹⁷ Ephesians 5:18

¹¹⁸ John 14:17

¹¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:18

¹²⁰ Galatians 5:22

¹²¹ Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:5

¹²² Hebrews 12:14

¹²³ 1 Corinthians 12:27

¹²⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:18

¹²⁵ Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11+28-30; Ephesians 4:7-12

¹²⁶ For example, generosity, assistance or administration. Romans 12:8; 1 Corinthians 12:28

tual,¹²⁷ and symbolic¹²⁸ service. They are all spiritual gifts without distinction. Therefore, the sensational gifts of signs are not to be valued more highly than the seemingly natural gifts of the Spirit.¹²⁹ For example, speaking in tongues merely edifies the person praying and does not belong in the assembly without specific interpretation.¹³⁰ Spiritual gifts are not proof of special qualifications¹³¹ and are of no use to the one who performs them if their source is not the indwelling love of God.¹³²

Since spiritual gifts are for the edification¹³³ of the congregation, they should urgently strive for them¹³⁴ and use them in accordance with biblical order.¹³⁵ However, it is the Holy Spirit who distributes the charisms according to His will.¹³⁶

I 3. Living Faith

All people are obliged to believe in the one God, the Creator of heaven and earth,¹³⁷ and in His gospel,¹³⁸ so that they may please God¹³⁹ and be saved.¹⁴⁰ This is why the Bible calls on all people to believe.¹⁴¹ However,

¹²⁷ For example, teaching, exhorting or having the word of wisdom. Romans 12:7-8; I Corinthians 12:8

¹²⁸ For example, miraculous powers. I Corinthians 12:10

¹²⁹ I Corinthians 14:19

¹³⁰ I Corinthians 14:27-28

¹³¹ Matthew 7:20-23

¹³² I Corinthians 13:1-3

¹³³ I Corinthians 12:7; 14:26

¹³⁴ I Corinthians 14:12

¹³⁵ I Corinthians 14:32-33

¹³⁶ I Corinthians 12:11

¹³⁷ Psalms 78:22; Romans 1:20

¹³⁸ John 16:19; John 15:22; I John 5:10

¹³⁹ Hebrews 11:6

¹⁴⁰ Mark 16:16

¹⁴¹ Acts 17:30; Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19

because they do not have a living faith by nature, but only a dead faith¹⁴² through which they cannot be saved, it is necessary to receive a faith that comes as a special gift and grace from God.¹⁴³ The Holy Spirit works this living faith in connection with the Word of God¹⁴⁴ through the new birth.¹⁴⁵ It is a spiritual ability to see,¹⁴⁶ so that those concerned recognize Christ as their Savior, trust Him completely, and receive eternal life.¹⁴⁷ Even if the faith worked by God¹⁴⁸ can be challenged and weakened many times, it still grows¹⁴⁹ and receives the victory,¹⁵⁰ and this through Jesus Christ, who begins and also completes faith in us.¹⁵¹

14. Repentance and Conversion

When a person's spiritual eyes are opened through the awareness¹⁵² of faith bestowed upon them,¹⁵³ they immediately recognize the wickedness of their fallen nature, how it conflicts with the holy will of God, and how it justly leads to eternal damnation. Consequently, such an individual is deeply troubled by their sins, prompting them to confess, forsake, and turn to Christ in conversion—a gracious gift from God.¹⁵⁴ Although this conversion does not remove our sin (only Jesus Christ can do so through

¹⁴² James 2:17; John 2:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 3:2

¹⁴³ Ephesians 2:8; John 6:29; Hebrews 12:2

¹⁴⁴ 1 Peter 1:23

¹⁴⁵ 1 John 5:1; John 1:12-13

¹⁴⁶ Ephesians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Hebrews 11:1

¹⁴⁷ John 3:36; John 6:40

¹⁴⁸ John 6:29

¹⁴⁹ 2 Thessalonians 1:3

¹⁵⁰ 1 John 5:4-5; Ephesians 6:16

¹⁵¹ Hebrews 12:2

¹⁵² Hebrews 11:1

¹⁵³ 1 Corinthians 2:14-15; Ephesians 1:18

¹⁵⁴ Acts 5:31; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:25; Hebrews 12:17

His blood), forgiveness cannot be expected without it. For this reason, the Bible urges all to repent and be converted.¹⁵⁵ While being born again is a singular, non-recurring experience,¹⁵⁶ acknowledging sin, repentance, and turning away from sin are ongoing necessities throughout one's lifetime.¹⁵⁷

I 5. Justification

The righteousness of God is revealed both in His law¹⁵⁸ and in His Son, Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁹ Since we are unable to fulfill the holy and spiritual law of God due to the weakness of our sinful flesh,¹⁶⁰ and are therefore under condemnation, God has freely given the righteousness He demands in the law through Jesus Christ to those who believe.¹⁶¹ It is not our works, merits, or anything within us that is counted as righteousness,¹⁶² but rather the righteous atonement Christ accomplished on the cross for our sins¹⁶³ and His perfect obedience to the divine law¹⁶⁴ that are counted as righteousness before God.¹⁶⁵ This means that although Christians still sin,¹⁶⁶ they are considered righteous and above reproach once and for all because

¹⁵⁵ Acts 2:38; 17:30

¹⁵⁶ I Peter 1:23

¹⁵⁷ I John 1:9

¹⁵⁸ Psalms 119:142; Romans 7:12

¹⁵⁹ Psalms 45:8; Romans 10:4; I John 2:1; I Peter 3:18

¹⁶⁰ Romans 7:14

¹⁶¹ Romans 8:32

¹⁶² Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16

¹⁶³ Romans 3:24; 5:9; I John 1:7

¹⁶⁴ Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 5:17; John 8:46; Hebrews 4:15; I John 3:5

¹⁶⁵ Romans 5:19; I Corinthians 1:30-31

¹⁶⁶ I John 1:8-10

se of this judicial act of God, through which the righteousness of Christ is undeservedly imputed to them.¹⁶⁷

This justification is solely a work of God's grace,¹⁶⁸ which we can only recognize, receive, and hold onto through faith.¹⁶⁹ Faith is not a meritorious work¹⁷⁰ of man, but a free gift of God.¹⁷¹

However, the true believer does not see the assurance of salvation found in justification as a "license for a frivolous life,"¹⁷² but rather as a powerful reason to strive for obedience and practical righteousness out of the deepest gratitude.

16. Adoption as Children

To all those who are born again and justified, God declares that they are children of God for the sake of Jesus.¹⁷³ While Christ is God's only begotten Son from eternity, we are His adopted children,¹⁷⁴ whom the Father loves with the same love with which He loves His Son, Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁵ We are therefore called His brothers¹⁷⁶ and are fully and completely children of God, with all the associated joys, freedoms, rights, and duties.¹⁷⁷ We also bear God's name,¹⁷⁸ enjoy the spirit of adoption,¹⁷⁹ and

¹⁶⁷ Romans 8:1; Romans 8:33; 1 Corinthians 6:11

¹⁶⁸ Romans 4:5; 8:33

¹⁶⁹ Romans 1:17; 3:22; Galatians 2:16; 3:6; Philippians 3:9; Hebrews 10:38

¹⁷⁰ Romans 3:24

¹⁷¹ John 6:29; Ephesians 2:8-9

¹⁷² Romans 3:8; Galatians 2:17-18

¹⁷³ John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:1; Romans 8:16

¹⁷⁴ Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:5 and Ephesians 1:5 therefore use the Greek word υἱοθεσία (huiiothesia) = adoption

¹⁷⁵ John 17:23+26

¹⁷⁶ Romans 8:29

¹⁷⁷ Luke 10:20; Romans 8:17+21

¹⁷⁸ 2 Corinthians 6:18; Revelation 3:12; 22:4

have free access to the throne of grace.¹⁸⁰ We may call out "Abba, Father"¹⁸¹ and receive mercy, protection, care, and teaching from Him.¹⁸² Because we are His children, we will never be cast out,¹⁸³ but are sealed until the day of our entrance into the glory of the Father¹⁸⁴ and receive the promise of eternal salvation as heirs.¹⁸⁵

17. The Certainty of Salvation

Those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, love Him sincerely and, trusting in Him, make an honest effort to walk in good conscience before God and His Word, can be firmly assured in this life that they are in a state of grace¹⁸⁶ and can look forward to the glory of God without doubt or hesitation. This assurance is not merely a conjectural and subjective opinion based on a fallible hope, but it is an infallible assurance of faith based on the promises of salvation that God has irrevocably given on the basis of the righteousness of Christ and His shed blood for the gospel¹⁸⁷. Living faith grasps these promises so firmly¹⁸⁸ that we experience full assurance,¹⁸⁹ and the Holy Spirit testifies to our spirit that we are children of God.¹⁹⁰ Our state of grace is also assured by the fact that, through the

¹⁷⁹ Romans 8:15

¹⁸⁰ Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 4:16

¹⁸¹ Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6

¹⁸² Hebrews 12:7

¹⁸³ John 10:27-30; Psalms 94:14; Isaiah 54:8-9; Lamentations 3:31

¹⁸⁴ Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 4:30

¹⁸⁵ Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7; Hebrews 1:14

¹⁸⁶ 1 John 3:1

¹⁸⁷ 2 Corinthians 1:20; Hebrews 6:17-19

¹⁸⁸ Hebrews 11:1-2

¹⁸⁹ Job 19:25; Romans 8:38-39; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 5:1

¹⁹⁰ Romans 8:16

activity of the Holy Spirit, we become more and more like the nature of Christ.¹⁹¹

However, the assurance of salvation of true believers can be shaken and even interrupted in various ways.¹⁹² This can happen if they are suddenly and powerfully challenged, if they fall into a particular sin that wounds their conscience and grieves the Holy Spirit,¹⁹³ or if they simply neglect the Bible and prayer, neglect the fellowship of believers, and stay away from the Lord's Supper. In these cases, their assurance of salvation can be darkened. Nevertheless, they do not lose their salvation,¹⁹⁴ for they are true children of God, in whose hearts the incorruptible seed of God¹⁹⁵ dwells. The Holy Spirit protects them from complete despair¹⁹⁶ and revives their assurance of salvation at the right time, so that they can once again fully enjoy the happiness of their salvation.¹⁹⁷

18. Sanctification

While justification places us in a final, fixed state,¹⁹⁸ sanctification is a lifelong process.¹⁹⁹ When we are born again, a new nature is added to our old, unredeemed nature, namely that of the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁰⁰ A lifelong, irreconcilable struggle arises between these two natures dwelling

¹⁹¹ Matthew 7:20; Luke 6:44; 1 John 3:9+14; John 5:4+18

¹⁹² Psalms 13:2; Psalms 30:7

¹⁹³ Psalms 32:3-5

¹⁹⁴ John 10:28

¹⁹⁵ 1 Peter 1:23

¹⁹⁶ Luke 22:32

¹⁹⁷ Psalms 42:5; Psalms 51:12

¹⁹⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:11

¹⁹⁹ Romans 6:5-6; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 4:19; Philippians 3:10

²⁰⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:9-10; Colossians 1:27

within us.²⁰¹ Through the superior, sanctifying power of Christ in us, the dominion of sin is broken in such a way that the sinful desires of the old man are increasingly weakened and killed off.²⁰² The holy characteristics of the new man are enlivened and strengthened²⁰³ in such a way that we ultimately reflect the image of God as it is perfected in Christ and are received into God's glory.²⁰⁴

Sanctification is a work of God that He carries out through His Spirit and through His Word in the hearts of His own.²⁰⁵ But the Lord also sanctifies His children through all events and life experiences, so that they are brought up in a fatherly way, brought to spiritual maturity, and prepared for a heavenly life.²⁰⁶ We are also called, by the grace of God, to strive for sanctification ourselves and to actively promote it through concrete obedience to the Word of God.²⁰⁷ Unfortunately, we fail again and again, but we are allowed to receive new forgiveness daily through the blood of Jesus Christ,²⁰⁸ so that we walk ever more carefully in the future,²⁰⁹ and our fellowship with the Lord becomes ever more intimate.²¹⁰

19. Baptism

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself commanded baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in connection with the Great Com-

²⁰¹ Galatians 5:17; 1 Peter 2:11; Romans 7:14-23

²⁰² Romans 6:14; Galatians 5:24

²⁰³ Colossians 1:11; Ephesians 3:16-19

²⁰⁴ 1 John 5:4; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 7:1

²⁰⁵ John 17:17; Ephesians 5:26; 2 Thessalonians 2:13

²⁰⁶ 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 1:8

²⁰⁷ 1 Peter 1:15-16; 3:15; Philippians 4:8; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 3:12

²⁰⁸ Matthew 6:12; 1 John 1:7+9; 2:1-2

²⁰⁹ 1 Peter 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:6

²¹⁰ John 17:20+22-24+26

mission.²¹¹ It is the outward sign of incorporation into the church of Jesus²¹² and is to be performed on those who confess in their baptism that they have been inwardly united with Christ through faith, crucified, buried, and also resurrected with Him.²¹³ Through the grace of repentance and conversion,²¹⁴ they have given their old life of unbelief to death and have risen to a new life with Christ. Because baptismal water is a symbol of the tomb through which Christ passed, united with the believer, it is also appropriate to immerse the person being baptized.

Even if only faith is necessary for salvation,²¹⁵ every Christian should nevertheless desire baptism, as it is essential to prove our obedience and devotion to Christ, who also allowed Himself to be baptized as our role model.

Since baptism does not require any particular degree of Christian maturity, but only the confession of having been saved by faith,²¹⁶ it should be administered after brief instruction,²¹⁷ early on after conversion²¹⁸ as an expression of undeserved grace. This ensures that every Christian can have a clear conscience²¹⁹ and enjoy their salvation.

²¹¹ Matthew 28:19

²¹² Acts 2:41; Galatians 3:27

²¹³ Romans 6:3-6

²¹⁴ Acts 2:38; 22:16

²¹⁵ Mark 16:16

²¹⁶ Acts 8:37

²¹⁷ Acts 8:35-38; 16:32-33

²¹⁸ Acts 2:41; 8:12; 9:18

²¹⁹ 1 Peter 3:21

20. The Holy Communion

On the night in which He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus instituted the holy celebration of the Lord's Supper²²⁰ as a sign of the New Covenant,²²¹ which His church is to observe repeatedly until He comes.²²² It is an act of worship in remembrance of Christ's atoning suffering and death²²³ and at the same time a proclamation of Christ's saving act.²²⁴ The bread and cup²²⁵ in the Lord's Supper are a sign, not the actual presence, of the broken body and shed blood of Christ. By eating and drinking, believers are assured that Christ is present and that they share eternally in Him and the benefits of His salvation.²²⁶ This is why the Lord's Supper is also an expression of the most intimate fellowship between Christ and His church²²⁷ and between all true believers.²²⁸ To ensure that the Lord's Supper is not a judgment for us, but a means of promoting spiritual growth, we should examine ourselves to see whether we are only eating and drinking outwardly or whether we are also receiving Christ into our hearts wholeheartedly through faith.²²⁹

²²⁰ I Corinthians 11:23-24

²²¹ Mark 14:24

²²² I Corinthians 11:25-26

²²³ I Corinthians 11:24-25

²²⁴ I Corinthians 11:26

²²⁵ Matthew 26:28

²²⁶ John 6:53-56; Matthew 26:26-28

²²⁷ I Corinthians 10:16

²²⁸ I Corinthians 10:17; 12:12+27

²²⁹ I Corinthians 11:27-29

21. The Great Commission

Shortly before His ascension, the Lord Jesus Christ left His disciples the legacy of His worldwide Great Commission.²³⁰ Together with them, all believers are called to proclaim the Gospel to all people of all nations. This is to be done regardless of age, gender, language, race, education, or possessions. The Great Commission also includes teaching biblical truths so that people can become true disciples of Christ and local churches can be established worldwide.

Since Jesus Christ is the only way to God and eternal life or eternal death depends on it, the Great Commission must not cease even where the gospel is forbidden by the state or for other reasons.²³¹ However, it should be done with wisdom, prudence, and always without violence, trusting that the Holy Spirit will win hearts destined for eternal life through the power of His love.

The Great Commission should not be restricted or restrained by anyone, but remains binding until the return of Christ, when the full number²³² of those who are to be saved has been reached. Until then, we are to win souls²³³ and pray especially for those who are persecuted and killed because of their confession.

22. The Church

In the New Testament, the church is referred to as the Elect.²³⁴ It consists of those chosen from all over the world and from all times who

²³⁰ Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:8

²³¹ Acts 5:29

²³² Romans 11:25

²³³ John 9:4; 1 Corinthians 9:22

²³⁴ Greek: ἐκκλησία (ekklesia)

have been or will be united in Christ Jesus as their head. These born-again believers²³⁵ form the one universal, visibly indistinguishable church in heaven and on earth. It is the body of Christ, His bride, the flock, the family, and the Israel of God and His temple.

This all-encompassing church is particularly evident on earth in its local assemblies, each of which represents the body of Christ. Under biblical leadership, believers in the local church remain committed to doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer,²³⁶ so that they may all be one²³⁷ and grow in all things towards Him who is the head.²³⁸

23. Good Works

Good works that stand before God are not those that unregenerate people simply think up.²³⁹ Even if unbelievers perform good deeds in accordance with God's commandments—which is preferable to their absence—they are still sinful before God.²⁴⁰ For even the most well-intentioned works of unbelievers are not done for the glory of God²⁴¹ but spring from an impure heart, fundamentally rooted in unbelief and contradiction to God.²⁴² Therefore, no one can be saved by good works,²⁴³ even if done with the best of intentions.

²³⁵ Hebrews 12:23

²³⁶ Acts 2:42

²³⁷ John 17:21-22

²³⁸ Ephesians 4:15

²³⁹ Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:8; Colossians 2:8

²⁴⁰ Genesis 4:3+5; 1 Corinthians 13:3; Hebrews 11:4+6; Romans 3:12-18

²⁴¹ Matthew 6:2; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 4:11

²⁴² Romans 8:7

²⁴³ Romans 3:20; 4:6; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9

Christians, as well, do not produce good works of their own accord that are acceptable before God.²⁴⁴ These are exclusively created by the Holy Spirit,²⁴⁵ who works in their hearts to will and accomplish them.²⁴⁶ The good works of believers are thus not the cause but the result of their rebirth. They are the fruit and hallmark of their renewed nature,²⁴⁷ which compels them, out of love and gratitude, to eagerly pursue good deeds without ceasing.²⁴⁸ For this, they receive a heavenly reward, which is not a reward of merit but a reward of grace.²⁴⁹

24. Life After Death

After death, people's bodies will return back to dust.²⁵⁰ However, since their souls neither die nor sleep and possess an immortal mode of being, they immediately return to God who created them.²⁵¹ The souls of those who have been made righteous by grace and perfected in holiness will be taken up into the glory of heaven. There, they will be with Christ and behold the face of God²⁵² while still awaiting the redemption of their bodies.²⁵³ The souls of the wicked will be cast into hell, where they will endure torment and utter darkness, reserved for the great day of judgment. Apart from these two dwellings for souls separated from their bodies, Scripture knows of none.

²⁴⁴ John 15:4-5

²⁴⁵ Romans 8:3-4; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 2:10

²⁴⁶ Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 13:21

²⁴⁷ Matthew 7:20

²⁴⁸ Ephesians 2:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:13; Galatians 6:9; Hebrews 13:16

²⁴⁹ Romans 4:4; 11:35-36; 1 Corinthians 4:7

²⁵⁰ Genesis 3:19; Psalms 104:29

²⁵¹ Ecclesiastes 12:7; Acts 7:59

²⁵² Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; Hebrews 12:23

²⁵³ Romans 8:23

25. The Return of Christ

The return of Christ will mark the culmination of history, as Jesus will come back in power and glory. His return will be personal, physical, visible, and triumphant.²⁵⁴ With this second coming, He will complete His work of redemption, bring an end to the present age, and hold a final judgment.²⁵⁵ This monumental event will begin with the rapture of believers.²⁵⁶ Firstly, the bodies of deceased children of God will rise from the grave, followed by the gathering of living Christians into the glory of God.²⁵⁷ It is here that the marriage of Christ, the Lamb of God, will take place,²⁵⁸ with His bride being the elect church²⁵⁹ from all times and nations. They will receive their ultimate glory and reign with Christ forever.

The exact timing of Christ's return is unknown and cannot be calculated.²⁶⁰ However, there are clear signs indicating its proximity.²⁶¹ These include the global proclamation of the gospel,²⁶² the conversion of many Jews to Christ,²⁶³ the prevalence of godlessness and lawlessness,²⁶⁴ persecution of Christians worldwide,²⁶⁵ the rise of false prophets and teachers,²⁶⁶ as well as an increase in warfare, terror, violence,²⁶⁷ and natural disasters.²⁶⁸

²⁵⁴ Matthew 16:27; 24:30; Acts 1:11; Hebrews 9:28; Revelations 1:7

²⁵⁵ Matthew 24:3; 16:27

²⁵⁶ 1 Thessalonians 4:17

²⁵⁷ 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

²⁵⁸ Revelations 19:7-8; 21:9; Matthew 22:2

²⁵⁹ Ephesians 5:23

²⁶⁰ Matthew 24:36+44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3

²⁶¹ Matthew 24:3+32-33

²⁶² Matthew 24:14

²⁶³ Romans 11:25-26

²⁶⁴ Matthew 24:10+12; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 2 Peter 3:3

²⁶⁵ Matthew 24:9-10

²⁶⁶ Matthew 24:4+11+23-25; 1 Timothy 4:1

²⁶⁷ Matthew 24:6-7

²⁶⁸ Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:11

For those unprepared, Christ's return will be a catastrophic event. Therefore, true Christians are urged to live their lives in a manner that reflects readiness to meet Christ at any moment, relying on the grace of the Holy Spirit.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ Matthew 24:44; 25:10