

Confession of Faith

We confess with **Matthew** that Jesus is the Christ, the son of David and Abraham, the Son of God, who is Immanuel (God with us), and that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary thereby fulfilling the law and the prophets and inaugurating the eschatological kingdom of heaven.

We affirm that for this new age the two great commandments of love to God and man, as taught by Jesus, deliver religion from the man-made evasions of casuistic legalism, careless antinomianism and the magnifying of minutia. As teacher and supreme interpreter of Old Testament law, Jesus reveals its radical depths and original intent as in his divorce and sabbath reforms.

As the perfectly obedient Messiah, Jesus made final atonement for sin by his death on the cross. As risen Lord, claiming all authority in heaven and earth, he commissioned his followers to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We confess with **Mark** that Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, the Son of God who was also the suffering Son of Man, came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. By his ministry, death and resurrection he inaugurated the kingdom of God and will, as Lord of history, soon effect its consummation. The kingdom of God, which is already present, calls for radical repentance and obedience to Christ, and for a commitment to follow him even through suffering and death to glory.

We acknowledge with the writer of **Luke-Acts** that Christianity is a universal faith, embracing not only all nations but all levels of society, making them one in Jesus Christ. It is a faith that in love lifts the outcasts and underprivileged, assuring them of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humankind. All who believe become recipients of the Spirit of God who enables them to persevere in constant prayer, gospel witnessing, and holy living.

We affirm with **John** that the Word, who was God and with God in the beginning, became flesh and dwelt among us. We confess him to be the one who took away the sin of the world, and thus whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. This new life is experienced now for the person of faith, but he who does not believe is condemned already.

With John, we confess Jesus to be the living water who satisfies our thirst for eternal life; the bread of life who satisfies our hunger for the more enduring existence; the light of the world who enables us to believe in the grace and truth of God; the good shepherd who gives his life for us. With John, we understand Jesus' passion to be the hour of his glory and the judgment of the world. We joyfully recognize that God is love and that we love because he first loved us. Because we abide in his love we keep his commandments, and lose all fear of the judgment.

We confess with **Paul** that though we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, in Christ is found a gift righteousness that puts us right with God. Christ bestows upon us now the favorable verdict of the last judgment. This glorious gift comes by faith alone, and this faith is graciously given to all who hear the gospel with an open heart. By his death and resurrection Jesus Christ not only vindicates God, but justifies us, reconciles us to God, adopts us into his family, redeems us from the consequences of sin, and cancels our guilt. This he does despite our personal failures and infirmities. Distinct from this gracious act of God in Christ is his important work of making us holy through the Spirit. This will be consummated by the gift of incorruption at the second advent, which is our blessed hope.

As we identify with Christ in his death, resurrection, and ascension, sin ceases to reign over us. Christ calls his believers into his kingdom which consists of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. In this kingdom, faith, hope, and love abide as the essentials of the Christian life, and while love is the greatest, faith is the first, for it establishes union with the Savior. The first fruits, pledge, and seal of our eternal inheritance is the inner witness of the indwelling Spirit who both sustains and comforts us in the fight of faith. Thereby we know that even those who now sleep in Jesus will rise again at the last trump to be forever with the Lord.

We recognize only one church — the body of Christ — the church invisible, composed of all grafted into Christ by faith, all alike priests and brethren of the new covenant, without hierarchy, and who for doctrinal authority acknowledge only the Holy Scriptures.

With the author of **Hebrews** we confess that God has spoken his last word through his son Jesus Christ. This Jesus, fully divine, fully human, gave his life to make expiation for the sins of the world and then ascended to sit in exaltation at God's right hand. Because of his identification with us in life, suffering and death, Jesus is the unique source of help in temptation and trial. He urges us to boldly draw near to receive grace and help in every time of need.

As the spotless son of God, separate from sinners, Jesus is greater than the angels, than Moses, than Melchizedec and Aaron. He is God's better messenger, better apostle, better priest in a better tabernacle, and he has established a better covenant by a better atonement. Now he offers us the better way of faith.

We confess with **James** that faith in Jesus Christ must always express itself not only in acts of personal piety, but also in self-giving for the relief of poverty, hardship, and suffering. The exploitation of others is an evil which Christians should oppose. We must love our neighbor as ourselves, showing no partiality, striving to translate the message of the gospel into words and deeds of mercy to humankind, and blessing and praise to God.

We confess with **Peter** that hope as well as faith sustains us as we pass through the fiery trial of persecution, knowing ourselves to be but pilgrims here — ones who are destined to wrestle unceasingly with the lusts of the flesh within and the unbelieving world without.

We affirm with **Jude** that Christians need to contend earnestly for that faith which was in the first century delivered complete, once for all time. And thus believing we refuse to yield to heretical faith or practice, and patiently await the final revelation of God's mercy.

With **John of Patmos**, we confess that he who suffered on Calvary's cross not only intercedes above for the oppressed saints but is sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. He is soon to return in glory to consummate his kingdom with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. Sin, death, and pain shall be no more, and God himself will dwell with his people who will sing his praises throughout the endless ages.