

## PASTOR RUSS' CONVERSION AND CALL TO THE MINISTRY

I received Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior on Christmas Eve, 1982 through the diligent witness of my loving wife and the leading of my father-in-law. I was employed full-time for the State of Maine and also worked full-time as a sound and lighting technician for a New England based rock band.

For the first six months I remained in the band and began to read extensively concerning the faith. After leading many of our friends to the Lord, my wife and I hosted weekly Bible studies. My role as teacher immediately emerged through the intensive study of the Scriptures, prayer, and the confirmation of other Christians. After joining 1st Baptist Church of West Gardiner, my pastor began to give me opportunities to preach as well as teach adult classes. I became a deacon of the church and served in that capacity for two years. Over the course of four years God's call upon my life for full-time ministry became unavoidable.

Through much prayer and encouragement by my wife, my pastor, and many other Christians, I decided to enter full-time study at New England Bible College. During my third year of study at the college my wife and I were called to serve Fayette Baptist Church.

Throughout the course of our years at Fayette we have had many valuable experiences which have taught us innumerable lessons concerning the pastoral ministry. I firmly believe that through the triumphs and tragedies of the years since our conversion my family and I have grown much closer to the Lord and to each other. There is still much to learn, yet above all God has confirmed His call upon my life to the ministry of the local church.

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

### THEOLOGY

I believe that there is one true God (Deut. 6:4; 1 Tim. 2:5) who can be defined as the infinite (1 Kings 8:27) and perfect (Jas. 1:17) spirit being (Jn. 4:24) in whom all things have their source, support, and end (Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:16-17) (Strong).

I believe that the Scriptures assume His existence (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 53:1; Heb. 11:6). They further teach that He is eternal, immortal, and invisible (Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17), incorruptible (Rom. 1:23), and immutable (Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17). He alone possesses such attributes as self-existence (Jn. 5:26), eternity (Ps. 90:2), omnipresence (1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 139:7-12), omnipotence (Matt. 19:25-26), omniscience (Ps. 139:1-6, 13-18; 147:5; 1 Jn. 3:20) and absolute sovereignty being both transcendent and immanent (Ps. 33:6-22; 103:19; Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1).

I believe that He is a personal God who in addition to possessing absolute and incommunicable attributes also possesses attributes which can be found in a limited and relative sense in man. These communicable attributes include holiness (1 Pet. 1:15-16), righteousness and justice

(Gen. 18:25; Ps. 145:17; Acts 17:31; 1 Jn. 2:29), love (1 Jn. 4:7-10), mercy (Lk. 6:36; Eph. 2:4), grace (Eph. 2:8), and truth (Jn. 8:31-32; 14:6; Eph. 4:15).

I believe that God exists in three co-equal, co-eternal persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - each being the same in substance (essential nature), but distinct in subsistence (manner of existence) (Gen. 1:1, 26; Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

## CHRISTOLOGY

### The person of Jesus Christ

I believe that Jesus Christ co-existed eternally with the Father before the foundation of the world (Jn. 1:1; 17:5) and together with the Father and the Holy Spirit was active in the creation of all things (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16). I believe that He is fully God, possessing all of the divine attributes (Matt. 28:18-20; Jn. 8:58; 18:4; Titus 2:13; Heb. 13:8), and is worthy of all worship (Matt. 14:33; Phil. 2:10; Heb. 1:6).

I believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God (Matt. 3:16-17; Jn. 3:16) who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary (Lk. 1:26-35; Gal. 4:4) and thus is not only fully God, but also fully man (Jn. 1:14; Phil. 2:5-8; Col. 2:9). I believe that when Jesus took the form of a man He willingly veiled His preincarnate glory and took on the limitations of humanity, yet He did not cease to be God (Phil. 2:7-8).

### The ministry of Jesus Christ

I believe that as a man Jesus was tempted in all respects, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22-24) in order to provide a satisfactory, substitutionary sacrifice for man's sin (Isa. 53:4-12; 2 Cor. 5:21). The motivation for this atonement was God's intense love for man (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8). Christ's voluntary death on the cross (Jn. 10:10-18; Heb. 12:2) accomplished redemption (Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 9:15), propitiation (Rom. 3:25; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10), expiation (Jn. 1:29; Heb. 10), and reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-19; Col. 1:19-23) for all those who come to Him by faith.

I believe that following His death and burial, Jesus was bodily raised from the dead on the third day (Acts 2:24; 1 Cor. 15:1-8). He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:1-11) and is presently at the right hand of the Father interceding on behalf of all believers (Rom. 8:34; 1 Jn. 2:1) serving as our Great High Priest (Heb. 7:22-28).

I believe that Christ will come again (Acts 1:11) to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16) and sit in judgment over all men living and dead.

## PNEUMATOLOGY

### The person of the Holy Spirit

I believe that the Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit is the co-equal, third person of the triune God. Christ's own words (Matt. 28:19; Jn. 14:16-18, 26; 15:26; 16:7), as well as those of the apostles (Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 13:14), attest to His person and work as co-equal with the Father and the Son. Moreover, the attributes of deity such as omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence are ascribed to Him (Job 33:4; Ps. 139:7; 1 Cor. 2:10-12). His eternity is likewise expressed (Heb. 9:14). The Holy Spirit is further identified as taking part in creation as is the Father and the Son (Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30).

### The ministry of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit's ministry is multi-faceted. I believe that in relation to God's word the Holy Spirit directly influenced the writers of Scripture and inspired their words (Jn. 14:26; 16:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21), and presently enables believers to spiritually discern and communicate that word (1 Cor. 2:9-16; 1 Jn. 2:20,27).

I believe that in relation to Christ the Holy Spirit's ministry was to anoint and empower Him (Lk. 4:18; Jn. 1:32; Acts 10:38) and to lead Him (Lk. 4:1). Through the power of the Holy Spirit Christ was offered as a sin offering (Heb. 9:14) and was raised from the dead (Rom. 8:11). His primary purpose today is to glorify Christ and to point men to Him (Jn. 15:26; 16:14).

I believe that in relation to conversion the Holy Spirit's ministry is to convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:8-11), to regenerate the believer by imparting spiritual life (Jn. 3:3-9; Titus 3:5), to indwell and baptize the believer into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 6:19; 12:13), and to seal the believer's salvation (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30). In addition, the Holy Spirit fills and empowers the believer (Acts 4:8; 4:31; Eph. 3:16; 5:18), producing fruit in him (Gal. 5:23-24). He intercedes for the believer in prayer (Rom. 8:26) as well as comforts (Jn. 14:16), guides (Rom. 8:14), and assures him (Rom. 8:16). In short, the Holy Spirit is involved in the sanctification of the saints (1 Pet. 1:2) and they are commanded to respond to him in continual obedience (Eph. 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thess. 5:19).

I believe that in relation to the church the Holy Spirit bestows gifts upon believers for the edification of the body and ultimately for the glory of God (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:7-13; 1 Pet. 4:10-11)! Not all believers have the same gift (1 Cor. 12:28-30) nor does anyone have all the gifts (1 Cor. 12:14-21). The Holy Spirit distributes these gifts according to His will (1 Cor. 12:11) and though not equally prominent, all are important (1 Cor. 12:22-26).

### BIBLIOLOGY

#### Revelation

I believe that God in His sovereign will has deliberately revealed Himself and therefore His truth to mankind generally through the means of nature, conscience, and history (Ps. 19; Rom. 1:18-21;

Acts 7:1-53). In addition, I believe that God has revealed Himself specifically at certain times to certain people through miracles, prophecy, His Son, and through Scripture (Heb. 1:1-2; Jn. 1:18; 5:39). I believe that Scripture is foundational to our understanding of God and His will and is absolutely fundamental to any and all doctrinal positions held by His church.

### Inspiration

I believe that inspiration can best be defined as "God's superintending of human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error in the words of the original autographs His revelation to man" (Ryrie).

I believe in the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures (Matt. 5:17-18; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21) in their original autographs. Moreover, I believe that they are entirely inerrant in all that they affirm, meaning wholly true (Ps. 119:160; Jn. 17:17); entirely infallible, meaning wholly trustworthy (Jn. 10:35); and entirely authoritative as God's will for man (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

### Interpretation

I believe that Scripture is to be interpreted in its normal sense according to its historical, grammatical, and cultural context. In addition, I believe that any interpretation must be harmonious with the wider context of Scripture and must be ultimately founded upon the Holy Spirit's illumination of these elements.

## ANTHROPOLOGY

I believe that man was created directly by God and is not the product of an evolutionary process of development from lower forms of life (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7). As to substance, man consists of both a material or physical part (Gen. 2:7; 1 Cor. 15:44; 2 Cor. 4:7) and an immaterial or spiritual part which includes man's soul (Gen. 2:7; Eccl. 12:7; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 2:11).

I believe that man was created in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27) in both a natural likeness including personality, intellect, emotion, and will (Gen. 9:6; Jas. 3:9), and a moral likeness (holiness) which for him was yet unconfirmed (Gen. 1:31; 3:8; Eccl. 7:29).

Man fell in his moral likeness when he sinned (Gen. 3) and incurred both physical and spiritual death (Gen. 3:19; Eph. 2:1,5). I believe that all men are descendents of Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:27-28; 3:20; 9:19) and thus have an inherited sin nature (Ps. 51:5) rendering them guilty and in need of redemption (Rom. 5:12-19).

I believe further that man is a being with endless existence. Although his earthly body (material) is temporal, the spirit (immaterial) is immortal (Eccl. 12:7). For the believer, the future of the body is death (unless Christ returns first) and resurrection to eternal life (Matt. 25:34; 1 Cor. 15:42-54). For the unbeliever, it is death (Heb. 9:27) and resurrection to judgment (Rev. 20:11-15) and

eternal punishment (2 Thess. 1:8-9).

## HARMARTIOLOGY

I believe that sin can be defined as the lack of conformity to the revealed will of God, thereby substituting the creature's will for the Creator's.

I believe that sin originated when Satan and other angelic creatures willfully disobeyed God and as a result became the first sinful beings (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; and possibly Ezek. 28:11-19). I believe that sin entered the human race when Satan deceived Adam and Eve into willful disobedience (Gen. 3; Rev. 12:9). Further, I believe that sin is of a personal nature (Isa. 53:6; Rom. 3:23) and includes both active deeds of commission and omission (Jas. 4:17).

I believe that man inherited a sinful nature at birth based on Adam's disobedience (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 7:14-21; Eph. 2:3) and is totally unable, of his own accord, to merit God's pleasure in any way (Rom. 3:10-18; 7:18; 8:6-8). Moreover, I believe that sin was universally imputed to man through Adam by virtue of the unity of the human race resulting in condemnation and physical death (Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:21-22) as well as spiritual death or separation from God (Gen. 2:17; Jn. 5:24; Eph. 2:1,5). Man is also rendered totally unable to effect a change in that nature, in and of himself, in order to conform to God (Jn. 6:44; 15:4-5).

I believe that the only remedy for both inherited and imputed sin is saving faith in Christ's sacrificial work on the cross (Jn. 3:14-18; Rom. 8:1). At the cross man's sin was imputed to Christ by God (Isa. 53:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). Conversely, for those who believe, the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to them (Rom. 5:17; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21).

## SOTERIOLOGY

I believe that salvation is by grace (Eph. 2:5, 8-9; Titus 3:4-7) through faith in Jesus Christ alone (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Jn. 5:12). Salvation is totally the work of God by His eternal choice (Jn. 6:37; Acts 13:48; Rom. 9:6-24; 2 Thess. 2:13), and for His eternal purpose (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:11-12; 2:10).

I believe that all those who receive, by faith, the Lord Jesus Christ become children of God (Jn. 1:11-12) and are born from above through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:3-8; Titus 3:5).

I believe that saving faith in Christ includes man's repentance (turning from sin), intellectually (2 Tim. 2:25), emotionally (2 Cor. 7:9-10), and volitionally (Acts 2:37-38) which is produced by God's work in him. It also includes a turning to God which again is an intellectual (Rom. 10:14,17; 1 Jn. 5:9-11), emotional (1 Pet. 1:8), and volitional response (Jn. 1:12; Rom. 10:19).

I believe that all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ are identified with Him

spiritually in position and practice (Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20). Moreover, I believe that every believer is declared righteous in position before God (Rom. 4:5-8; 5:1-2; 8:1, 33-34) on the basis of Christ's substitutionary death (Rom. 3:24-26; 5:8-9; 2 Cor. 5:21).

I believe that every believer is eternally secure in his salvation based on the infinite purpose, power, and love of God the Father (Jn. 6:39-40; Jn. 10:27-29; Rom. 5:8-11; 8:28-39; 2 Tim. 1:12; Jude 24); the intercessory work of God the Son (Rom. 8:34-39; Heb. 7:25; 1 Jn. 2:1-2); and the regenerating, baptizing, indwelling, and sealing work of God the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:3-7; 14:16-17; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30).

I believe that every believer can experience the assurance of his salvation by the witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16; 1 Jn. 4:13) concerning the finished work of Christ (1 Jn. 5:11-13) and should manifest such faith in a steadfast life of godliness (Col. 1:21-23; 2 Pet. 1:10) and corresponding practice (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9; Titus 2:14; Jas. 2:17,26).

## ANGELOLOGY

### General information

I believe in the existence of angels as taught by Scripture. Christ Himself gave testimony to their existence (Matt. 18:10; 26:53). Scripture clearly implies that angels were created (Ps. 148:2,5; Col. 1:16) before the creation of the world (Job 38:4-7) as holy beings (Gen. 1:31). Angels are spirit beings (Heb. 1:14) with intellect (1 Pet. 1:12), emotion (Lk. 2:13), and will (Jude 6), who can assume bodily form (Gen. 18:2; 19:1; Heb. 13:2). They cannot propagate after their kind nor can they die (Lk. 20:35-36). They are innumerable (Heb. 12:22; Rev. 5:11), yet their number is fixed.

Angels are superior to men in knowledge, but not omniscient (Matt. 24:36), they are superior in power, but not omnipotent (2 Pet.2:11); they are superior in mobility, but not omnipresent (Zech. 6:5-7). They are never to be worshipped by men (Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10), but will one day be judged by men (1 Cor. 6:3).

Although there appears to be a hierarchy in their organization, there is a fundamental distinction of good and evil angels (demons).

### Good Angels

Unfallen angels are referred to as both holy (Acts 10:22) and elect (1 Tim. 5:21). Their ministry (Heb. 1:14) includes such activities as encouragement and guidance (Acts27:23-24), protection and deliverance (Ps. 91:11; Acts 12:5-11), interpreting God's will (Dan. 9:21-22), announcing and executing judgment (Gen. 19:12-13; Rev. 14:6-7), and worshipping before God (Rev. 5:11-12). Angels served Christ during His earthly ministry (Lk. 2:8-15; Matt. 4:11; Lk 22:43; Acts 1:10) and will assist Him during His future ministry (Matt. 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7; Rev. 16:1; 21:12).

I believe that angels are presently and actively involved in ministering for God.

## Evil Angels

Fallen angels or demons were originally good angels who willfully rebelled and sinned (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Their leader is none other than Satan (Matt. 12:24; Rev. 9:11) and are seemingly organized in ranks (Eph. 6:11-12) under his direction (Matt. 25:41).

Some demons are confined (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6) awaiting judgment, while others are temporarily confined in the abyss (Lk. 8:31; Rev. 9:1-11). Still, others are extremely active in the world in a variety of ways primarily to thwart the purpose of God and the spiritual progress of His children (Eph. 6:12). They seek to promote idolatry (Ps. 106:36-38; 1 Cor. 10:19-20) and false doctrine (1 Tim. 4:13; 1 Jn. 4:1-3). They have the ability to inflict physical harm (Matt. 12:22; Mk. 9:17-18; Lk. 13:11) and influence nations (Dan. 10:13, 20-21). Scripture rightly describes their character as spiritually unclean, evil, and wicked (Matt. 10:1; Lk. 8:2; Eph. 6:12). Satan who is a created, angelic, and personal spirit being is therefore limited in his power, presence and knowledge. Satan is synonymously referred to in Scripture as the devil, dragon, and serpent of old (1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:3-12), the evil one (Matt. 13:19), Beelzebul (Matt. 12:24), the father of lies (Jn. 8:44), Belial (2 Cor. 6:15), tempter (Matt. 4:3), destroyer (Rev. 9:11), the deceiver of the world (Rev. 12:9), the accuser (Rev. 12:10), the ruler of this world (Jn. 16:11), the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2) and the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4), all of which indicate and identify his true character and influence as the archenemy of God.

Satan and his fallen angelic host who rebel against God have already been judged and are destined for the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; Jn. 12:31; 16:11; 1 Jn. 3:8; Rev. 20:7-10). Scripture has warned and history has shown that Satan and his demons will aggressively and openly oppress believers as well as attempt to deceptively lead them from truth (1 Pet. 5:8; Mk. 8:31-33; Jas. 4:7; 2 Cor. 11:3-4, 14). Moreover, unbelievers may be subject to demonic possession (Lk. 22:3; Jn. 13:2, 27).

## ECCLESIOLOGY

I believe that the church can be defined as the universal company of all those who, in this age, have been born of the Spirit, and who have been baptized by that same Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), which was established and instituted subsequent to the death (Acts 20:28), resurrection, and ascension of Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:19-23; 4:7-12) who is the head (Col. 1:18).

I believe that the church historically began at Pentecost (Acts 2) and functions as a living organism (1 Cor. 12), thereby being referred to as the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18,24).

I believe that the local church is the visible representation of that universal body. It is comprised of believers (1 Cor. 1:2) who willingly accept their biblical responsibility to join together stimulating one another to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24-25) for the purpose of glorifying God. This is accomplished through a variety of forms and functions such as worship, prayer, the preaching of God's word, and the practice of God's ordinances (Acts 2:41-47).

I believe in the autonomy of the local church under Christ's headship and that the Holy Spirit has given gifted men to the church to lead it to maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:11-16). It is the responsibility of these men to establish the orderly conduct of the church and its effective operation (1 Cor. 14:40; 1 Tim. 3:1-15; Titus 1:5-9).

I also believe that, while autonomous, the local church must recognize its responsibility to work interdependently and cooperatively with other local assemblies of like faith. Scripture clearly instructs the body in its responsibilities of maintaining harmony (Rom. 15), accountability (Acts 15:1-35), and mutual care (Acts 16:1; Rom. 15:26-27).

I believe that the biblical mandate of the church is to make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20). This is accomplished both by evangelism (Acts 1:8) and edification (Acts 2:41-47) through the manifestation of faith, hope, and love (Jn. 13:34-35; Heb. 10:22-24) in unity (Jn. 17:20-23).

I believe that the Lord commanded that the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are to be observed by the church (Matt. 28:18-20; Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-25). I believe that baptism symbolizes the identification of a believer with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and is best portrayed by immersion (Rom. 6:3-5). I also believe that the Lord's Supper is to be observed by the church until Christ returns (1 Cor. 11:26) as a memorial and proclamation of Christ as well as an occasion of fellowship with Christ and His people (1 Cor. 10:16-17). Neither of these ordinances should be considered a means of salvation.

## ESCHATOLOGY

I believe that God has a logical plan and purpose in history, which is to bring glory to Himself through the establishment of His righteous kingdom (Dan. 7:27; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 11:15).

I believe in the premillennial return of Christ for His church at which time all believers in this age will be gathered together with Him in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-18) to receive immortal bodies (1 Cor. 15:51-57), to be judged (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15), and to be with Him forever (Jn. 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:17). I further believe that Scripture teaches this gathering to be imminent and therefore pretribulational (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:1-11; 2 Thess. 2:6-9; Rev. 3:10; 6:17). Moreover, I believe that until this event occurs believers are to be engaged in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

I believe that before Jesus establishes His kingdom rule over the earth there will be a seven year period of extreme tribulation (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21-22) during which time Satan will exercise his

power under the sovereign hand of God (Dan. 7:24-25; 2 Thess. 2:3-12) as God's wrath is poured out upon the earth (Rev. 6:12-17) which is described in detail (Rev. 6-19). This time of tribulation culminates in the battle of Armageddon and the physical return of the Lord Jesus to the earth to begin a literal one thousand year reign of peace during which time Satan is bound (Rev. 16:16; 19:11-20:3). The OT\* and tribulation saints are then resurrected, judged, and reign with Christ (Rev. 20:4; cf. also Dan.12:2). At the end of the one thousand years Satan is loosed for a time to deceive the nations and wage his final war. He is ultimately overthrown and cast forever into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:7-10). The wicked are then resurrected and judged by Christ at the Great White Throne and cast into the lake of fire (Jn. 5:24-30; Rev. 20:11-15) to suffer eternal separation from God's presence (2 Thess. 1:8-9).

I believe that the present heaven and earth will be destroyed by God and new ones created in which the righteous will dwell forever with God (2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 21:1-22:5).

I believe that in anticipation of these events all believers are to be diligent in practicing and proclaiming the word of truth (Titus 2:13-14; 2 Pet. 3:14-15a).

\*Some hold that OT saints are resurrected at the rapture.