

## **ARTICLE 3 - DECLARATION OF FAITH**

### **SECTION 3.01 -- BACKGROUND OF OUR DECLARATION**

The Meridian Baptist Church of Newton, Kansas, was conceived in the hearts of a small group of God's children, who felt that FREEDOM and LIBERTY of the individual Christian was to be expressed in some more far-reaching manner than just giving lip service to the basic principle. To this end, a plan of action was placed into motion. A truly INDEPENDENT, FUNDAMENTAL, MISSIONARY, EVANGELICAL, AND BAPTISTIC Church was brought into being, not to merely say, "thus and so," but to place into action the principles they so dearly loved and held sacred.

BIBLE DOCTRINE AND BIBLE PRINCIPLE MUST BE INSEPARABLE COMPANIONS IF THE CHURCH IS TO BE TRUE TO THE WORD OF GOD.

THEREFORE, we thus set forth to you, THE THINKING CHRISTIAN, what we believe to be true BIBLE DOCTRINE and PRINCIPLE, finding no room for compromise of those things which we hold dearer than life itself.

### **SECTION 3.02 -- BIBLE DOCTRINE**

#### **(A) THE HOLY SCRIPTURES**

WE BELIEVE the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the verbally inspired Word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible, and God-breathed. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

#### **(B) DISPENSATIONALISM**

WE BELIEVE that the Scriptures interpreted in their natural, literal sense reveal seven divinely determined dispensations or rules of life which define man's responsibilities in successive ages. These dispensations are not ways of salvation, but rather are divinely ordered stewardships by which God directs man according to His purpose. Three of the more familiar dispensations are the law, the church, and the kingdom. (Genesis 1:28; 1 Corinthians 9:17; 2 Corinthians 3:9-18; Galatians 3:13-25; Ephesians 1:10; 3:2-10; Colossians 1:24-25, 27; Revelation 20:2-6)

#### **(C) THE GODHEAD**

WE BELIEVE in one Triune God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, co-equal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections. (Deuteronomy 6:2-4; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

#### **(D) THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST**

(1) WE BELIEVE that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful man. (John 1:12-14; Luke 1:26-38; Galatians 4:4-5).

(2) WE BELIEVE that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice; and that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead. (Romans 3:24; 1 Peter 2: 24; Ephesians I: 7; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; 1 Peter 1:3-5)

(3) WE BELIEVE that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God, where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate. (Acts 1:9-10; Hebrews 9:24; Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1-2).

**(E) THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

- (1) WE BELIEVE that the Holy Spirit is a person Who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and that He is the Supernatural Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ, indwelling and sealing them until the day of redemption. (John 16:7-11; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 1:13, 14; 4:30).
- (2) WE BELIEVE that He is the Divine Teacher Who guides into all truth, and that it is the privilege and duty of all to be filled with the Spirit. (John 16:13; I John 2:20-27; Ephesians 5:18).
- (3) WE BELIEVE that the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues and the gifts of healing, were temporary and no longer function today. Speaking in tongues was never the common or necessary sign of the baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit. Ultimate deliverance of the body from sickness or death awaits the consummation of our salvation in the resurrection, though God frequently chooses to answer the prayers of believers for physical healing. (1 Corinthians 1:22; 13:8, 14, 21-22).

**(F) THE DEVIL, OR SATAN**

WE BELIEVE in the personality of Satan, that he is the unholy god of this age, the author of all the powers of darkness, and is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire. (Isaiah 14:12-17; Matthew 4:1-3; II Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 20:7)

**(G) THE CREATION**

WE BELIEVE the Genesis account that God created the universe in six literal, 24-hour days and BELIEVE that man came by direct creation of God. We reject evolution, the Gap Theory, the Day-Age Theory, and Theistic Evolution as unscriptural theories of origin. (Genesis 1 and 2; Exodus 20:11; Colossians 1:16-17; John 1:3).

**(H) THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF MAN**

WE BELIEVE that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but that in Adam's sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God; and that man is totally depraved and, of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition. (Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 3:22-23; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:17-19).

**(I) SALVATION**

WE BELIEVE that salvation is a free gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Whose precious blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins. (Ephesians 2:8-9; John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

**(J) GRACE IN THE NEW CREATION**

WE BELIEVE that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new creation is brought about in a manner above our comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life. (John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 5:1; John 3:6-7; Acts 16:30-33; 2 Peter 1:4; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 2:13; John 3:8).

**(K) THE ETERNAL SECURITY AND ASSURANCE OF BELIEVERS**

- (1) WE BELIEVE that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever. (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1,38,39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; 1 Peter 1:5).
- (2) WE BELIEVE that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as "an occasion to the flesh." (Romans 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13; Titus 2:11-15).

**(L) THE TWO NATURES OF THE BELIEVER**

WE BELIEVE that every saved person possesses two natures, with provision made for victory of the new nature over the old nature through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit; and that all claims to the eradication of the old nature in this life are unscriptural. (Romans 6:13; 8:12-13; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 Peter 1:14-16).

**(M) SEPARATION**

WE BELIEVE that all the saved should live in such a manner as to not bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord. God commands His people to separate from all religious apostasy, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices, and associations, and to refrain from all immodest and immoderate appearances (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Romans 16:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; Romans 12:1-2; 14:13; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

**(N) THE LOCAL CHURCH**

(1) WE BELIEVE that a local church is a congregation of immersed believers, associated by covenant of faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word; that its officers are pastor and deacons whose qualifications, claims, and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures. (Acts 2:41-42; Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:17-28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Acts 15:13-18).

(2) WE BELIEVE the true mission of the church is the faithful witnessing of Christ to all men as we have opportunity; We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self-government free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations: that the one and only Superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit; that it is scriptural for true, obedient, like-minded churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the Gospel; that each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation; that on all matters of membership, of policy, of government, of discipline, and of benevolence, the will of the local church is final. (1 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 1:22-23; Acts 20:17-28; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23-24; Acts 15:13-18).

**(O) BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER**

WE BELIEVE that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life, that it is a prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation. We believe that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration of His death until He comes and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination. (Acts 8:26-39; John 3:23; Romans 6:3-5; Matthew 3:16; Colossians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28).

**(P) THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED**

WE BELIEVE that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and are sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in His esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked and under the curse; and this distinction holds among men both in and after death, in the everlasting felicity of the saved and the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost. (Malachi 3:18; Genesis 18:23; Romans 6:17, 7:6; 3:23; 1 John 5:19; Proverbs 14: 32; Luke 16:25; Matthew 25: 34-41).

**(Q) CIVIL GOVERNMENT**

WE BELIEVE that civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society; that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed, except in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ Who is the only Lord of the conscience and the coming Prince of the kings of the earth. (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; II Samuel 23:3; Exodus 18:21-22; Acts 4:19; 5:20; 23:5; Matthew 22:21; Daniel 3:17-18).

**(R) HUMAN SEXUALITY**

- (1) WE BELIEVE that God prohibits intimate sexual activity outside of marriage. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. (Genesis 2:24; 19:5, 13; 26:8-9; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; 1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4)
- (2) WE BELIEVE that the only Scriptural marriage is the joining of one man and one woman. (Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 5:22-23)

**(S) FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

- (1) WE BELIEVE that men and women are spiritually equal in position before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home and the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home, and men are to be the leaders (pastors and deacons) of the church. Accordingly, only men are eligible for licensure and ordination by the church. (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:18; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 3:4-5, 12)
- (2) WE BELIEVE that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church. The wife is to submit herself to the Scriptural leadership of her husband as the church submits to the headship of Christ. Children are an heritage from the Lord. Parents are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values and leading them, through consistent lifestyle example and appropriate discipline, including scriptural corporal correction. (Genesis 1:26-28; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 127:3-5; Proverbs 19:18; 22:15; Mark 10:6-12; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4, Colossians 3:18-21; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7)

**(T) DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE**

WE BELIEVE that God disapproves of and forbids divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. Although divorced persons or divorced and remarried persons may hold positions of service in the church and be greatly used of God for Christian service, divorced persons or persons married to a divorced person may not be considered for the offices of pastor or deacon. (Malachi 2:14-17; Matthew 19:3-12; Romans 7:1-3; 1 Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6)

**(U) SANCTITY OF LIFE**

WE BELIEVE that life is a gift of God and must be respected from conception until natural death. The direct taking of an innocent human life is a moral evil, regardless of the intention. Abortion and euthanasia constitute the unjustified, unexcused taking of human life. We reject any teaching that abortions of pregnancies due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control, or the physical or mental well being of the mother are acceptable. (Exodus 20:13; 23:7; Matthew 5:21; Acts 17:28; Job 3:16; Psalm 51:5; 139:14-16; Isaiah 44:24; 49:1, 5; Jeremiah 1:5; 20:15-18; Luke 1:44)

**(V) LOVE**

WE BELIEVE that we should demonstrate love for others, not only toward fellow believers, but also toward those who are not believers, those who oppose us, and those who engage in sinful actions. We are to deal with those who oppose us graciously, gently, patiently, and humbly. God forbids the stirring up of strife, the taking of revenge, or the threat or the use of violence as a means of resolving personal conflict or obtaining personal justice. Although God commands us to abhor sinful actions, we are to love and pray for any person who engages in such sinful actions. (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:44-48; Luke 6:31; John 13:34-35; Romans 12:9-10, 17-21; 13:8-10; Philippians 2:2-4; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Titus 3:2; 1 John 3:17-18)

**(W) LAWSUITS BETWEEN BELIEVERS**

WE BELIEVE that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes. We believe the church possesses all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members. We do believe, however, that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander. (1 Corinthians 6:1-8; Ephesians 4:31-32)

**(X) MISSIONS**

WE BELIEVE that God has given the church a great commission to proclaim the Gospel to all nations so that there might be a great multitude from every nation, tribe, ethnic group, and language group who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. As ambassadors of Christ, we must use all available means to go to the unsaved and not wait for them to come to us. (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:20)

**(Y) SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST**

WE BELIEVE in that blessed hope, the personal, imminent return of Christ, Who will rapture His church prior to the seven-year tribulation period. At the end of the Tribulation, Christ will personally and visibly return with His saints to establish His earthly Millennial Kingdom which was promised to the nation Israel. (Psalm 89:3-4; Daniel 2:31-45; Zechariah 14:4-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13-18; Titus 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Revelation 3:10; 19:11-16; 20:1-6).