

BEREAN BAPTIST CHURCH

Fayetteville, NC 28314

Pastor Sean Harris

First Class – Week 3 – Our Doctrine and Articles of Faith

www.BBCFNC.org/FirstClass

~ OUR DOCTRINE AND ARTICLES OF FAITH ~

Independent Fundamental Baptist.

- When we say those words, we don't want you to go, "OH! They are part of the IFB! They are just like all other IFB churches." We don't want you to think in those terms and put us in a category and put us in a box. That's like saying "Oh, you're a soldier." Well all soldiers are not the same so to say you're a soldier doesn't always mean the same thing. That could be a very positive thing or a very negative thing depending on what your perspective is. So let me go over what we mean when we say that we are an Independent Fundamental Baptist Church.
1. ***Independent*** – We are not affiliated by any higher organization. We do not take orders from any higher organization. There isn't a bishop that tells me what I'm going to do. There isn't a larger organization that takes our money and does what it wants to with it. Independent simply means independent. We have our own trustees; we have our own Constitution, we can change it whenever we want to; we can purchase property whenever we want to; we can sell property whenever we want to. We decide all of that as a congregation made up of active voting members.
 - So if we are going to make any major changes in Berean Baptist Church, it is the voting members of the congregation that will decide those changes. If we want to buy a piece of property it will be determined by our voting membership. If we want to take out a loan it will be determined by our voting membership. If we want to sell a piece of property it will be determined by our voting membership. If we want to change our name it will be determined by our voting membership. If we want to get a new article of faith it will be determined by our voting membership. If we want a new Pastor it will be determined by our voting membership. Those are the major areas that I've just articulated that guide us as to how decisions are made within the congregation and they would happen at a special members meeting. Those meetings are held during the evenings, we would clear the room and only have voting members in the room, we would have rosters and we would have to make sure that you are an active member. You cannot be on the role and then come back after 6 months and decide that now you are going to cast your vote on a matter. You must be an active member of the church in order to vote.
 2. ***Fundamental*** – By "Fundamental", we mean the actual fundamentals of the faith.
 - Let's use an analogy. Give me a fundamental of a car. What are some examples we can use that once you take away this aspect we no longer have a car? -Wheels, Engine, Brakes. Well, brakes, you might still have a car but it wouldn't be a very safe car. -Door – well, I guess you could still get in the car but it would be rather difficult. – Steering Wheel – Yes without a wheel you probably wouldn't go anywhere so it would defeat the purpose of a car. What about Air Conditioning? - No, that is not an essential to have a car. Leather Seats? – No, also a non-essential. So when we say the fundamentals of the faith, we mean the very things that if you pull them away, you don't have the faith anymore. So if you take away the deity of Christ do you still have the faith? - No. If you take away the resurrection of Christ; if you leave Him in the grave; do you still have Christianity? - No. What about His virgin birth? If Christ was not born of a virgin, do we still have Christianity? - No. So these are the fundamentals of the faith, this is what mean when we say Fundamental.

3. **Baptist** – When we say Baptist, what are Baptists generally known for? - Immersion. Yes, immersion, that's a big one. What else? How about soul liberty; individual priesthood of the believer?
- We believe that we can have a disagreement on something and still respect them. Who is the founder of the Baptist denomination in America, does anybody know? - *Roger Williams*. In what state? - *Rhode Island*. Why was Rhode Island founded? - To split from Massachusetts. Why? He had a difference of opinion in the church; there was this halfway covenant going on, and some other issues. So he said "I want to start a state where you don't have to agree with every single thing within the church". From that, he started the Baptist church where we can have different disagreements among ourselves and still have a common bond. So we, as Baptists, respect that we can have a different view from a different congregation. We believe in the autonomy of the local church. That is to say that we don't believe in any kind of a hierarchy. We don't think that there should be a mother-church over these churches. We believe every local church is independent, should ordain its own pastor, should ordain its own deacons, and should be able to make decisions within itself and we get that from the model in the New Testament.

THE EARLY CHURCH

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and of prayers.” – Acts 2:42

Let's go over the **4 things** that you see the church is doing in this text.

1. **Teaching of doctrine**
2. **Fellowship**
3. **Breaking of bread**
4. **Prayer**

So we have 4 major components that the early church was involved in. Let's go over these 4 things.

- ❖ **Teaching Doctrine** → The Apostles' Doctrine; you are going to be learning doctrine and becoming grounded in the doctrine of the faith.
- ❖ **Fellowship** → They hung out together. They spent time together. They enjoyed being together.
- ❖ **Lord's Supper** → The breaking of bread. That is actually communion.
- ❖ **Prayer** → They prayed together. They prayed at the beginning of the service and at the end of the service. In the evening services you will see that all the men come up together and pray. Wednesday nights we take prayer requests from each other.

Of those 4 things (**Doctrine, Fellowship, Communion and Prayer**), the one that I see the most neglected in Americas churches is **Doctrine**.

- Most churches will Fellowship together; most churches will take Communion together; most churches will Pray together. But how many are teaching doctrine and truth and making sure that you are grounded in Christ so that when a Jehovah Witness or Mormon knocks on the door or when Glenn Beck says something stupid and you can say "that is not Biblical" because you have been taught truth and you have been grounded in doctrine.
- When you are flipping through channels like TBN, or any of the Inspirational or Christian networks, you can say "No, that is not Biblical" because you have been grounded the apostles' doctrine.

FAITHFULLY ABIDING BY DOCTRINES

Look at our **Covenant** in paragraph 3. **One of the statements that you make is that you will faithfully abide by the doctrines.**

- So you and I can disagree on a certain issue and you can still be a member of this church and have a difference of opinion. But what you can't be doing is teaching something different and causing divisions in the church. You can say "I have a difference of opinion in this" but you cannot say "I have a difference of opinion on this and let me get others to rally with me on this". If you do that you're going to cause division within the congregation.
- *Faithfully abide by the doctrines DOES NOT MEAN* you must say "Yes, I embrace this and agree with this and this is official" it's not like you must accept things as a Catholic accepts the Pope's interpretations on all things.
- *Faithfully abide by the doctrines DOES MEAN* that when you are not sure you entirely agree with something, you will not be divisive about it. You will pray about it and work through it, and you may have a difference of opinion but you are not going to divide the church over it.
- If you decide the Lord is leading you to be a teacher in the church, what will happen is we will sit down with you and go more in depth over these things to see where you're at. We will have a more detailed questionnaire for you because we cannot have a scenario where a teacher decides what is right to teach and people start questioning what the truth is.
- Everyone is allowed to have their own opinion and in nearly all matters somebody is right and somebody is wrong. I can very easily be wrong. I study just like you do, I pray just like you do. I pray that you will grow in your understanding and that I will grow in my understanding and that we will grow in our understanding together.
- There are some things that we know for certain to be truth. Christ is either the Son of God or the whole thing is a sham. Those are decisive things. You cannot be questioning the deity of Christ and become a part of this fellowship. There are clearly things that are foundational, and there are other gray areas.

WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE BIBLE?

2 Timothy 3:16 tells us what the word of God is useful for. This would be a good verse for you to commit to memory.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (God-breathed), and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" – 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Let's go over those ways in which we are to use the word of God.

1. Doctrine/Teaching → Addressing what we should teach/educate
2. Reproof/Rebuke → Addressing what is wrong or incorrect; pointing out errors
3. Correction → Addressing what is right/true/correct
4. Training → Addressing how to guide/equip/prepare/instruct us in righteousness

~ For what purpose? → That the man or woman of God is completely furnished for all good works. We want you to be competent in truth and able to serve God to the best of your ability. If a soldier does something wrong, he might receive a gentle reminder as to what is right. If he does it again, he may receive more of a rebuke.

The idea is that you are growing; God is working in your life. God has a plan for your life. The word of God is the means by which He is going to communicate that to you.

SOUND DOCTRINE

“As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that you might charge some that they teach no other doctrine.” – 1 Timothy 1:3

- This is why you will hear me say names in the pulpit and I will call people out in the pulpit. I have a responsibility as your shepherd to make you aware of wolves by name. You won't have to wonder who I'm talking about it. I am going to call out two names today in church: Rob Bell and John Eckhart. These people are teaching false doctrine and I need to make you aware of that. I don't want you to be going to the book store and wondering whose material you need to avoid.
- Elders and Pastors that rule well will labor in sound doctrine. Expect me every week to labor in word and doctrine. When you come in on Sunday morning you are not looking for a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. You are looking for a full meal. Steak, potatoes, vegetables, desert, bread...you are not looking for leftovers from last week. You want to eat well at 10:45 this morning. You want to be fed from the word of God so I am going to do my very best every single week to do that.
- Now remember, I am human just like you. There is not a sermon that is fed-ex'd to me. I have to work and labor to develop it. I can get it wrong, I am not perfect. But I should not be preaching anything that is contrary to sound doctrine.
- There is such thing as truth. There are concepts considered that are considered authoritative and are thus worthy of acceptance by all members of the community of faith. We do not subscribe to the idea that there is no absolute truth. That's where we're at today in churches. We have people saying “you can believe that but don't jam that down my throat”. We believe there is absolute truth and everyone is expected to embrace absolute truth and if you do not accept absolute truth you will stand before God and answer for your refusal to embrace the truth. Not everything is debatable.

Doctrine → What we believe to be true based on our understanding and interpretation of the Bible.

- ✓ We always interpret from a contextual literal perspective first
- ✓ We believe there is one, and ONLY one interpretation
- ✓ We believe in one interpretation and MULTIPLE applications
- So does the Holy Spirit use the word of God speak to people in many different ways? - Yes.
- But that does NOT mean that everybody gets to pick their own interpretation of the Bible. Somebody is right, and somebody is wrong, that is all there is to it.
- There are some things which we can agree to disagree.
 - Classic example of that is say a Freewill Baptist comes to visit. He believes in the same God of the Bible. He believes in the same Christ. He believes in the same plan of salvation. He believes in heaven and hell. All of these are fundamentals of the faith on which we agree.
 - Where we differ is we believe in the eternal security of salvation and the Freewill Baptist believes you can lose your salvation. Only one of us can be right because truth is absolute. But we can agree to disagree in the non-essentials of the faith so long as we agree on the fundamentals of the faith. We can fellowship and discuss with our Freewill Baptist brothers and sisters. Each of you will have to decide what you believe. At this church, we believe the born-again believer is unable to lose his or her salvation. We do not believe there is anything you can do yourself to lose your own salvation.
 - Having said that, there some passages in Hebrews that will have you saying “Woah, woah...what does this mean? This is hard! This looks like you can lose your salvation” So we do not ridicule someone for their position that you can lose your salvation because this is a very, very difficult thing to understand in the word of God. Very, very difficult. We as Christians need to respect those differences on those gray areas.
- On the black and white areas, I am not going to respect those differences. I am not respecting Muhammad for his difference in opinion with regard to Christ. But when it comes to a brother in Christ, I will respect those differences.

HOW DOES BEREAN FIT UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF CHRISTIANITY?

- ❖ **From the world's point of view we would be under this umbrella, classified in this way: →**
 - Christianity would be the big umbrella.
 - Protestant and Catholic would be split under that and we would be under the Protestant umbrella.
 - Evangelical would be the next umbrella under Protestant.
 - Baptist would be the next umbrella under Evangelical.
 - Fundamental would be the umbrella under the Baptist umbrella.
- Christian-Protestant-Evangelical-Baptist-Fundamental is our umbrella ←**

These are the things to which we hold true:

- There is only ONE God
 - God is a Triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)
 - Jesus is the Son of God
 - Man is fallen
 - The Bible is the verbally inspired word of God (God-breathed)
 - Virgin birth of Christ
 - Sinless life of Christ
 - Literal physical/bodily death on a cross, burial and resurrection of Christ
 - Christ is the only mediator between God and man
 - Vicarious Substitutionary Atonement (Jesus' sacrifice is enough to forgive all sins)
 - Bodily resurrection (not just some spiritual resurrection where His body is still in the tomb)
 - Jesus' literal physical ascension into heaven
 - Salvation by grace through faith in Christ
 - The Great Commission
 - The literal existence of Satan
 - Literal heaven and hell
- ➔ Not all evangelicals are going to believe that all things in the Bible are true. For instance, some say that Jonah and the whale is too far-fetched and unlikely to have been a literal occurrence. Not us, we would say that was a literal occurrence.

When I say Evangelical Christians, I am talking about groups like conservative Presbyterians, conservative Methodists. In our own city I am talking about examples like Simon Temple. Very Evangelical, I spent time talking with them and they are very Evangelical people. Evangelical Christians are going to agree with us on things like Christ is the only way to the Father; that there is a real Satan; that the Great Commission is seeking and saving the lost.

WHAT DISTINGUISHES BEREAN FROM OTHER EVANGELICAL CHURCHES?

~ The Pre-millennial return of Christ.

- That is to say we believe Christ is coming back BEFORE the thousand year kingdom.

~ We believe in the total depravity of man.

- That means there is no divine spark in human beings. You've heard Evangelicals stating that there is a little bit of good in every man. While we can agree that we are not all as bad as we could be, we believe that man is totally depraved. There is no person who is born with such a good nature that they don't have to be born-again. Unless you are born-again, you will not enter the Kingdom. If we were to say that we believed that man is inherently good, we would not be in need of salvation. Man is inherently bad and needs to be born-again. You come out of

the womb selfish, kicking, screaming and wanting your way. Psychologists would tell you that if you were not born into such a corrupt world; if we could just put you in a perfect box that you would be a good person. We would say that you do not have to teach a child to be selfish, they come out that way. Selfishness is not the result of living in a corrupt world. They come out of the womb that way. You are going to teach your children not to be selfish, not to lie, and they are still going to be selfish and they are still going to lie. Do you remember when you first lied? Did someone teach you how to lie? No, they are sinners, they come out of the womb sinning.

~ We believe in the end of the sign gifts as seen in the apostles.

- We don't believe that there are currently men that can just go lay hands on people and are able to heal other people. We don't believe people can raise the dead and do things like Peter and Paul did. We believe those signs were given to the apostles to authenticate their ministry. Not everyone believes that, but this is the position of the church.

~ We believe in Baptism by immersion

~ We believe in the Eternal Security of the Believer

~ We believe that Pastors and Deacons should be males

THE LORD'S SUPPER ~

~ We believe that there is no justifying grace when you take the Lord's Supper. Your sins are not forgiven because you took the Lord's Supper. You are not closer to being saved because you took the Lord's Supper. We believe that the Lord's Supper is a time of remembering what Christ did on the cross.

- If you are a Catholic, you believe that you take Christ into your life every time you consume the bread.
- If you're Lutheran, you believe in a hybrid of those two ideas.

WHAT ELSE DO WE BELIEVE? ~

~ We believe that sin is only justified through the blood of Christ.

~ We believe in the priesthood of the believer.

- Priesthood means that you don't have to go to a Pastor or anybody else to have a personal relationship with Christ.

~ We believe in a real literal heaven

~ We believe in a real literal hell and that it is eternal separation, no purgatory

~ We believe the Bible is the supreme authority for life

~ We believe in Creation, we do not believe in Evolution or any hybrid of Creation and Evolution, we completely reject Evolution

QUESTIONS? ~

Answer to Question about Pre-millennialism:

- Yes. The general idea is that the age we are currently living in is called the Church Age. That is to say that in the past, God worked through Israel; the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel rejected Christ. Peter offered them another opportunity to receive Christ. Some received Him, but generally the Jews said no. Paul went to the Gentiles and we believe that was the start of the Church Age. God is presently working through born-again believers and that a coming time in the future He will rapture the church. We believe that one second Christians will be on the planet and the very next second they will all be gone. That is incredible to think about. This is a highly debated belief among Christians. We believe this can be taught out of 1 Thessalonians. At that point, the 7 year tribulation will begin on the earth, the Anti-Christ will reveal himself to mankind and at the end of that 7 years, "Pre-millennial" – Christ comes back. At that point, He will establish His Kingdom back on the earth and focus on the Jews; fulfilling His promise to Abraham; fulfilling His promise to David; fulfilling His promises to the Jews. He will do that for at least a thousand years. The millennial period will be at least a thousand years. Then there will be a final judgment and a new heaven and a new earth. So the distinction there is the idea that Christ will be ruling on the planet in Jerusalem for a thousand years in a literal sense. Others outside of that general view believe that Christ is already doing that through the local church. Whereas we believe that He is going to do that literally.

Answer to Question about Speaking in Tongues:

- It is not my mission in life to persuade others that they are wrong about speaking in tongues. Now when someone insists that if you have not been given the gift of tongues then you are not saved, I will combat that because they are adding to the plan of salvation. Most assemblies of God are going to do their very best to get you to receive Christ and after that they are going to wear you out with this insistent claim that you should be able to speak in tongues. It is just not necessary. But if someone believes in the gift of tongues not as means of salvation, it is not my calling to combat that. I know there are counterfeit events of speaking in tongues, but I am not able to distinguish which tongues are counterfeit and which are not; I cannot do that. But I can go into how tongues is often inappropriately practiced. If you look at the Biblical order which the early church used as to how they should practice speaking in tongues, many churches do not abide by that. But it is not my purpose to combat this unless it concerns having added to the plan of salvation.