

The 1647 Westminster Confession of Faith

A brief overview of each of the chapters, along with a number of key texts. Study these doctrines, and the texts referenced, with prayer and supplication, and we pray that the Lord will bless these means to your soul.

Chapter 1 — Of the Holy Scripture

- **Authority:** Scripture is the complete, supreme, infallible, inspired rule of faith and life.
- **Sufficiency:** Nature reveals there is a God we must worship; Scripture alone contains all things necessary for us to know to glorify God, man's salvation, faith and life.
- **Interpretation:** Scripture interprets itself, and the Holy Spirit enables believers to understand its saving truth.
- **Key texts:** Rom 1:19–20; Psalm 19:1–6; 2 Tim 3:16–17; Heb 1:1–2; Psalm 119:105; Is 8:20; 2 Pet 1:19-21; Isa 8:20; 1 Cor 2:13-14; John 5:39

Chapter 2 — Of God, and of the Holy Trinity

- **God's nature:** One God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; which are equal in essence and attributes.
- **Perfections:** God is infinite, eternal, unchangeable, immutable, omniscient, omnipotent, holy, just, merciful.
- **Key texts:** Deut. 6:4; Matt 28:19; Rom 11:33–36; Psalm 90:2; 2 Cor 13:14; Mal 3:6; John 1:1; Acts 5:3-4

Chapter 3 — Of God's Eternal Decree

- **Sovereign counsel:** God, of His own will, freely and unchangeably decrees all that comes to pass according to the counsel of His will.
- **Election and reprobation:** God has ordained some men and angels to eternal life, and others to everlasting death, for the manifestation of His glory in the display of mercy and justice.
- **Key texts:** Eph 1:11; Rom 9:11–24; Isa 46:9–11; Acts 15:18; John 6:44; Rom. 8:28–30; Acts 2:23; 2 Tim 1:9; Eph 1:4-5

Chapter 4 — Of Creation

- **Act of creation:** God created the world, and all things, out of nothing by His Word in six days.
- **Man in God's image:** God created man male and female in His image, with knowledge, righteousness and holiness.
- **Goodness:** Creation was very good and ordered under God's providence.
- **Key texts:** Gen 1:1-31; Col 1:16–17; Heb 11:3; Ps 33:5–9

Chapter 5 — Of Providence

- **Sustaining rule:** God upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events, by His most wise and holy providence, to His glory and purposes.
- **Means and secondary causes:** God has ordained both the outcome and the means to accomplish His purposes, and works through secondary causes, while preserving human responsibility, and without being the author of sin.
- **Key texts:** Prov 16:33; Matt 10:29–31; Acts 17:28; Col 1:17; Rom 8:28; Neh 9:6; Prov 16:9; James 1:13; Gen 50:20; Ps 103:19; Heb 1:3

Chapter 6 — Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof

- **Original sin:** Adam was seduced by Satan into sin, fell from his state of original righteousness, and this fall brought corruption and guilt to his posterity.
- **Consequences:** Because this original sin with the consequences of guilt, corruption and death are imputed to all posterity of ordinary generation, all people are born spiritually dead and inclined to evil in every part of their nature.
- **Key texts:** Gen 3; Rom 5:12–19; Ps 51:5; Eph 2:1–3; Rom 3:10–18; Gen 6:5; 1 Cor 15:21–22

Chapter 7 — Of God's Covenant

- **Covenant structure:** God deals with humanity by covenants (works and grace), with the covenant of grace unfolding in Scripture.
- **Covenant of Works:** God entered into a covenant of works with Adam, promising life upon perfect obedience.
- **Covenant of Grace:** After the fall, God established the covenant of grace, freely offering unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.
- **Unity of covenant:** The covenant of grace is one, administered differently through the Old and New Testaments.
- **Key texts:** Gen 3:15; Gal 3:16–29; Heb 8:6–13; Rom 4:13–16; Eph 2:15–19; Gen 2:16–17; Rom 5:12–19; John 3:16; Rom 10:6–9

Chapter 8 — Of Christ the Mediator

- **Person:** Christ is fully God, as the second person in the Trinity, and fully man in one Person.
- **Office and Work:** He is the Prophet, Priest, and King of His Church; He fulfilled the law, offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, and continually intercedes for His people, and rules His Church.
- **Key texts:** Heb 1:1–3; Phil 2:5–11; Heb 4:14–16; John 1:14; 1 Tim 2:5; Col 2:9; Heb 9:15; Rom 5:19; Heb 7:25; John 17:2,6; Isa 53:5–6

Chapter 9 — Of Free Will

- **Bound will:** After the fall, the human will is enslaved to sin, and both will not and cannot choose saving good without Divine grace.
- **Responsibility maintained:** People remain morally accountable for their choices.
- **Restored Freedom:** Through grace, God renews the will, enabling believers to respond to the gospel and grow in holiness.
- **Key texts:** Rom 3:10–12; Eph 2:1–5; John 6:44–45; Jer 13:23; Prov 21:1; Deut 30:19; Phil 2:13

Chapter 10 — Of Effectual Calling

- **Divine summons:** God outwardly calls sinners through the gospel and inwardly calls His elect by the Spirit, giving them new life and faith.
- **Inward work:** In effectual calling, God renews the heart by the new birth, enabling the sinner to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.
- **Key texts:** John 6:37–44; 1 Cor 1:24–31; Eph 2:4–6; Rom 8:30; Acts 16:14; 2 Tim 1:9

Chapter 11 — Of Justification

- **Forensic declaration:** Justification is an act of God's free and sovereign grace by which He pardons their sin and accounts and accepts them as righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, for Christ's sake alone.
- **By faith alone:** Justification is received through faith, not works; resting entirely on Christ. However, while faith alone is the instrument of justification, faith is never alone, but accompanied by all other saving graces.
- **Eternal Purpose:** God, from all eternity, decreed whom He would effectually call, Christ in time died and rose again for their justification, and the Holy Spirit at the appointed time applies Christ to the sinner. This state of justification is full and complete, and cannot be lost in time or eternity.
- **Key texts:** Rom 3:21–28; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8–9; 2 Cor 5:21; Rom 4:5-8; Rom 5:1; Phil 3:9; Acts 13:38-39; 1 John 1:7-9; John 10:28; Titus 3:5-8

Chapter 12 — Of Adoption

- **Family relation:** Believers are adopted as God's children in and for Christ, and entitled to the liberties and privileges of the children of God.
- **Privileges:** Adoption grants God's fatherly care, access to Him in prayer, loving discipline, and the inheritance of eternal life.
- **Key texts:** Gal 4:4–7; Rom 8:15–17; 1 John 3:1–2; Eph 1:5; John 1:12

Chapter 13 — Of Sanctification

- **Progressive holiness:** Sanctification is a work of God in the believer: the body and lusts of sin being weakened and saving graces strengthened to the practice of true holiness.
- **Means and struggle:** Sin is weakened and grace strengthened through the Spirit and the use of God's appointed means. This sanctification is throughout the whole person, yet imperfect in this life. Because of this, there is a continual warfare between the lusts of the flesh and the work of the Holy Spirit.
- **Key texts:** 1 Thess 4:3; Rom 6:1–14; Phil 2:12–13; Gal 5:17, 22–23; 1 Cor 6:11; John 17:17; Rom 8:13; Heb 12:14

Chapter 14 — Of Saving Faith

- **Definition:** Saving faith is a gracious accepting, receiving and resting upon Christ alone with knowledge, assent, and trust.
- **Degrees:** The strength of faith varies in believers, and may often be tested and weakened, but gets the victory in Christ who is the author and finisher of our faith.
- **Key texts:** Heb 11:1–3; Eph 2:8–9; Rom 10:9–10; Acts 16:31; Mark 1:15; Rom 4:5

Chapter 15 — Of Repentance Unto Life

- **Nature:** Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace: it is a sorrow over sin with hatred of it, and a purpose to forsake it whether great or small, and turn unto God in Christ; and this produced by the Spirit.
- **Relation to faith:** Repentance accompanies and follows effectual calling; every believer must repent of particular sins, particularly.
- **Key texts:** Acts 3:19; 2 Cor 7:10; Luke 13:3; Matt 3:8; Ezek 18:21–23

Chapter 16 — Of Good Works

- **Outcome of grace:** Good works are those commanded by God and performed in faith through the power of His Spirit.
- **Not meritorious:** They do not earn or cause justification, but show gratitude to God, and confirm living faith in and love to Christ.
- **Key texts:** Eph 2:10; James 2:14–26; Matt 7:16–20; Titus 2:14; Phil 2:12–13

Chapter 17 — Of the Perseverance of the Saints

- **Security:** Those truly regenerated will persevere in faith and cannot finally fall away, as they are preserved by God until the end.
- **Warning and restoration:** Though believers fall into sin, and may be dreadfully backslidden, they are never utterly destitute of grace and will be brought back through repentance.
- **Key texts:** John 10:27–29; Phil 1:6; 1 Pet 1:3–5; Rom 8:28–39; Heb 3:14

Chapter 18 — Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation

- **Basis of assurance:** While false assurance and presumption exist, true assurance rests on God's promises, Christ's finished work, and the inward witness of the Spirit, aided by visible fruit and evidences of grace wrought in the soul.
- **Distinguish:** Assurance is not essential to faith, and may be long in coming, or be shaken and diminished by neglect, sin and temptation; but yet the true believer is never destitute of the fruits of regeneration.
- **Key texts:** Rom 8:16; 1 John 5:13; Heb 6:11–12; 2 Pet 1:10; John 10:28–29

Chapter 19 — Of the Law of God

- **Threefold use:** God's moral law reveals sin, restrains evil, and guides believers in holy living.
- **Continuity:** While the ceremonial laws of Israel were fulfilled in Christ and therefore no longer binding, the moral law (Ten Commandments) remains binding for all peoples.
- **Key texts:** Rom 7:9-25; Matt 5:17, 38-39; Matt 22:37-40; Gal 3:24; James 2:8; Exod 20:1-17; Psalm 119:101, 104, 128; Heb 8:10; Jer 31:33

Chapter 20 — Of Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience

- **Freedom in Christ:** Believers are free from the law's condemning power, but bound to Christ.
- **Conscience:** God alone is Lord of the conscience, and believers must not be required to believe or practice anything contrary to Scripture; however, those who oppose lawful power or the exercise of it, may rightly be called to account before the Church.
- **Key texts:** Gal 5:1; Rom 14:5-6; Col 2:16-17; Acts 5:29; John 8:36

Chapter 21 — Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day

- **Regulative principle:** God, who has lordship and sovereignty over all, has revealed the acceptable way He desires to be worshipped.
- **Prayer and Thanksgiving:** Prayer, with thanksgiving, is required of all men and is to be made for all things lawful.
- **Scriptures:** the reading of Scriptures with godly fear, sound preaching and hearing of the Word, and singing Psalms with grace in our hearts; as well as the proper administration and worthy receiving of sacraments, are to be used in a holy and religious manner.
- **Sabbath:** One day of holy rest and worship (Christian Sabbath or Lord's Day) to be kept holy unto the Lord until the end of the world.
- **Key texts:** Matt 15:9; Deut 12:32; Heb 10:24–25; Exod 20:8–11; Mark 2:27–28

Chapter 22 — Of Lawful Oaths and Vows

- **Oath use:** Oaths invoking God are lawful in serious matters when truth is required, and should not be entered into lightly.
- **Vows:** Vows to God are binding if sincerely made, and are not to be made concerning things forbidden in the Word of God, or unable to be performed.
- **Key texts:** Matt 5:33–37; James 5:12; Num 30:2; Lev 19:12; Deut 23:21

Chapter 23 — Of the Civil Magistrate

- **Authority:** Civil government is ordained by God to maintain justice, peace, and public order.
- **Limits:** Civil rulers must not govern the Church's doctrine or worship; yet have authority and duty to preserve unity and peace in the Church, keeping the truth of God pure and entire.
- **Key texts:** Rom 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:13–17; Matt 22:21; Prov 8:15–16; Acts 4:19–20

Chapter 24 — Of Marriage and Divorce

- **Definition:** Marriage is a covenant between one man and one woman for life. Marriage is ordained for mutual help, lawful offspring, and moral purity.
- **Limits:** Christians must only marry in the Lord, and not be unequally yoked with those outside the reformed faith; nor should they marry within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity forbidden in the Word and the law of the land.
- **Divorce:** Permitted only for adultery or willful abandonment per Scripture.
- **Key texts:** Gen 2:24; Matt 19:4–6,9; 1 Cor 7:10–16; Mal 2:16

Chapter 25 — Of the Church

- **Nature:** The Church is the body of Christ, consisting of all the elect throughout all ages. The Church is both invisible (known only to God, consisting of the whole number of the elect) and visible (a society of professing believers). Christ is the Head of the Church and sits at the right hand of God; and no man or angel can or may exalt themselves to that height.
- **Marks:** The true church is identified by the pure preaching of the Word, proper sacraments, and church discipline.
- **Key texts:** Matt 16:18; Acts 2:41–47; Eph 1:22–23; 1 Cor 12:12–27; Heb 12:23

Chapter 26 — Of the Communion of Saints

- **Mutual fellowship:** Through personal union with Christ, believers share in spiritual goods, duties, and comfort; they are bound to maintain holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God for their mutual edification.
- **Limits:** This communion with Christ does not imply equality with Christ, nor suggest being partakers of His Godhead. Nor does this Christian fellowship imply perfect agreement or infringement of personal property.
- **Key texts:** Acts 4:32; 1 Cor 12:25–27; Heb 10:24–25; Phil 2:1–4; 1 John 1:3

Chapter 27 — Of the Sacraments

- **Signs and seals:** Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, ordained to seal and exhibit grace; designed to represent Christ and His benefits.
- **The Right Use:** Though the sacraments themselves do not confer any power, they confirm and nourish faith when rightly administered and received.
- **Key texts:** Rom 4:11; 1 Cor 11:23–26; Matt 28:19–20; Gal 3:27; Mark 10:14

Chapter 28 — Of Baptism

- **Significance:** Baptism is the New Testament sign and seal of the covenant of grace, and signifies the washing away of sin, as well as entrance into the covenant community and into the visible church.
- **Mode and subjects:** Administered once with water by pouring or sprinkling; believing parents and their households (including infant children) are to be baptized throughout their generations.
- **Key texts:** Matt 28:19; Rom 6:3–4; Col 2:11–12; Gen 17:7–10; Acts 2:38,39; Rom 4:11,12

Chapter 29 — Of the Lord's Supper

- **Spiritual presence:** Christ is spiritually present; believers outwardly partake of the real bread and real wine, and inwardly feed on Christ and all the benefits of His death by faith.
- **Purpose:** A perpetual remembrance and thanksgiving, and seal of communion with Christ and His benefits.
- **Administration:** To be administered by the ministers of Christ in the public assembly, not to be given privately or to wicked and ignorant men
- **Key texts:** 1 Cor 11:23–26; John 6:53–58; Luke 22:19–20; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 10:16–17

Chapter 30 — Of Church Censures

- **Discipline:** Church discipline (admonition, suspension, excommunication) maintains purity and order. This discipline is to be administered by the officers within the church.
- **Aim:** Restoration of the offender and defense of the church's witness.
- **Key texts:** Matt 18:15–18; 1 Cor 5:1–5; Gal 6:1; 2 Thess 3:6,14; Titus 3:10–11

Chapter 31 — Of Synods and Councils

- **Church assemblies:** For the proper government and edification of the Church, assemblies of church leaders (synods or councils) should meet to deliberate on doctrinal matters and church order. These gatherings reflect the biblical pattern of collective wisdom and oversight.
- **Authority and function:** Synods are to settle doctrinal controversies, give direction for worship and government, and address complaints within the Church. Their decisions are to be respected when they agree with Scripture, since their authority is ministerial under Christ.
- **Limits and fallibility:** Synods may err and are not the final rule of faith—Scripture alone holds that authority. They must address only ecclesiastical matters and should not interfere in civil affairs except in extraordinary circumstances.
- **Key texts:** Acts 15:2–6, 22–31; Acts 16:4; Matt 18:17–20; Acts 17:11; Eph 2:20; Prov 11:14; John 18:36; Luke 12:13–14

Chapter 32 — Of the State of Men After Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead

- **Intermediate state:** The body returns to dust at death, but all souls have an immortal subsistence, immediately returning to God who gave them. Believers are received into heaven and present with Christ after death; unbelievers cast into the miseries of hell. There is no purgatory or other destination beyond these two.
- **Resurrection:** At Christ's return, the living will be changed, and the dead bodies will be raised, and all will be judged. Bodies of both believers and unbelievers will be united with their souls.
- **Key texts:** Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; 1 Thess 4:13–18; John 5:28–29

Chapter 33 — Of the Last Judgment

- **Final tribunal:** Christ will judge the living and the dead, rendering final rewards or punishments.
- **Public and righteous:** All deeds, hidden or open, will be brought to light.
- **Glory of God:** This day will reveal the glory of God's mercy in the salvation of the elect, and of His justice in the damnation of the reprobate. The righteous shall go to eternal life and receive that fulness of joy in the presence of the Lord, while the wicked shall be cast into eternal torments and everlasting punishment.
- **Key texts:** Matt 25:31–46; Rev 20:11–15; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10–12