

Bethlehem PBC OKC

Articles of Faith

- Article 4

What are the Articles of Faith?

Articles of Faith (AOF) are short summaries of doctrines that a church publishes and holds to as a statement of belief. Most PB Churches still have them, and most are similar (but not identical).

When the Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church of Jesus Christ in Oklahoma City was constituted in November 1900, the body of believers there adopted these articles as a public declaration of "those things which we most surely believe."

AOF do not rise to the level of Scripture, but they are central points upon which anyone who joins our assembly must believe and affirm.

Bethlehem PBC AOF: <https://pbokc.org/us/articles-of-faith/>

Article 4

We believe that the entire human family are dead in trespasses and sins by reason of the first transgression and are utterly unable to recover themselves from their fallen condition.

What does this Article mean?

Some Basic Definitions

The “First Transgression” was the first sin – Adam in the garden.

The “Entire Human Family” describes all human beings. Everyone who is a descendent of the first man Adam. This covers all races, creeds, nations, peoples, kindreds, tongues.

“Trespasses and Sins” are distinct but related concepts. Both terms convey the idea of committing an offense against God.

- Trespasses (*paraptōma*) means to have fallen or stumbled
- Sin (*hamartia*) means to have missed the mark

There were both sin offerings (Leviticus 4) and trespass offerings (Leviticus 5-6) under the Law of Moses

“Dead” means a state of complete spiritual separation from God.

“Fallen Condition” and “Utterly Unable to Recover” means this state of death is complete and permanent unless God intervenes.

Trespasses and Sins

There has been much discussion through the centuries about the differences between trespass and sin offerings under the Law.

Sin Offerings (Lev 4, 16)

Provided for an offense against God. No restitution was possible. The animal was normally not eaten. The carcass was burned outside the camp. Jesus was our sin offering (Hebrews 9:7).

Trespass Offerings (Lev 5-6, 19:20-22)

Provided for an offense against God or men. Restitution was provided in some cases. The animal could be eaten by the priests. Jesus was our trespass offering (1 Peter 2:24)

Sins and trespasses are a complete affront to God, His Nature, His Holiness, His Commands, and the Order that He has established.

Original Sin

Article 4 affirms the Doctrine of “Original Sin”

Original Sin means that when the first man Adam ate of the forbidden tree, he, and all of his descendants, died a spiritual death. Adam continued to have natural life for a time (he breathed and walked around etc., as we do), but natural death came upon him and comes upon us eventually as well.

But more importantly, Adam immediately died spiritually to the things of God in the garden. He was now a sinner, a corrupt thing, dead in trespasses and in sins, and completely separated from God.

This state is the natural state of all human beings. We are sinners from conception due to our relation to Adam. We add to this by our own sins and trespasses that we commit, which shows this state of death in trespasses and in sins.

Total Depravity

Article 4 affirms the Doctrine of “Total Depravity”

Total Depravity means that everything about a naturally born man is completely dead to the spiritual things of God. He is “depraved,” meaning absolutely morally corrupt and wicked. Man by nature is evil, the enemy of God, and desires nothing to do with Him.

Total Depravity does not mean that a natural man is as evil as he possibly could be. A natural man may do things in society that appear to be good and nice for his neighbor, based on societal constraints or own personal motivations and benefits. Nothing that such a man does can commend himself to God, the Righteous Judge.

How Then Can We Be Saved?

It is staggering to come to an understanding that we by nature truly are the children of wrath, in complete rebellion against God, that there is nothing good or deserving within ourselves. We are helpless to get ourselves out of this fallen condition, and there is no desire on our part to be rescued anyway.

We need a great Savior to rescue us. He must do it all for us, and He did.

“And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.” Mark 10:26-27

What are some Scriptures that teach the Principles of Article 4?

Some Scriptures that teach the Principles of Article 4

Genesis 2:17: “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Genesis 3:6: “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”

Romans 5:12: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”

Ephesians 2:1: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;”

Matthew 19:4: “And he [Jesus] answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female”

Some more Scriptures that teach the Principles of Article 4

Psalm 14:1-3: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: *there is none* that doeth good, no, not one.”

1 Corinthians 2:14: “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Romans 8:6-8: “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Some more Scriptures that teach the Principles of Article 4

Isaiah 64:6: “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

Genesis 6:5: “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Mark 7:20-23: “And he [Jesus] said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, coveteousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”

A Further Listing of Scriptures from the Group On Article 4

- Eph 2:1-10
- Mark 10:26-27
- Ps 53:1-3
- Rev 3:14-17
- Gen 6:5
- Gen 8:21
- 1 John 3:4
- Col 2:11-14
- Rom 5:6-12
- Eccl 7:20
- Eze 16:4-6
- Rom 7:14-25
- John 8:42-45
- 1 Cor 2:12-14
- Jer 13:23
- Jer 17:9
- Gen 3:8-24
- Rom 8:5-8
- Gen 4:7
- Rom 6:23
- Eze 36:22-28

* And many, many more

Conclusion

Man by nature is dead in trespasses and in sins.

This state of spiritual death is because of our relation to the first man Adam who sinned. Our own sins show ourselves to be in the same state of death by nature.

Man by nature is wholly depraved, and has no desire for or understanding of spiritual things.

In this state of death, natural man has no ability or will to recover himself from this fallen condition.

It took a great Savior, Jesus Christ, to die in our place to satisfy the wrath of God because of our transgression. Having been reconciled by the death of the cross, God now sends the Holy Spirit to give His Elect spiritual life (the new birth). Only once a man is given spiritual life does He love God and seek the things of God.

Faith in Jesus Christ is the evidence, not the cause, of spiritual life.