



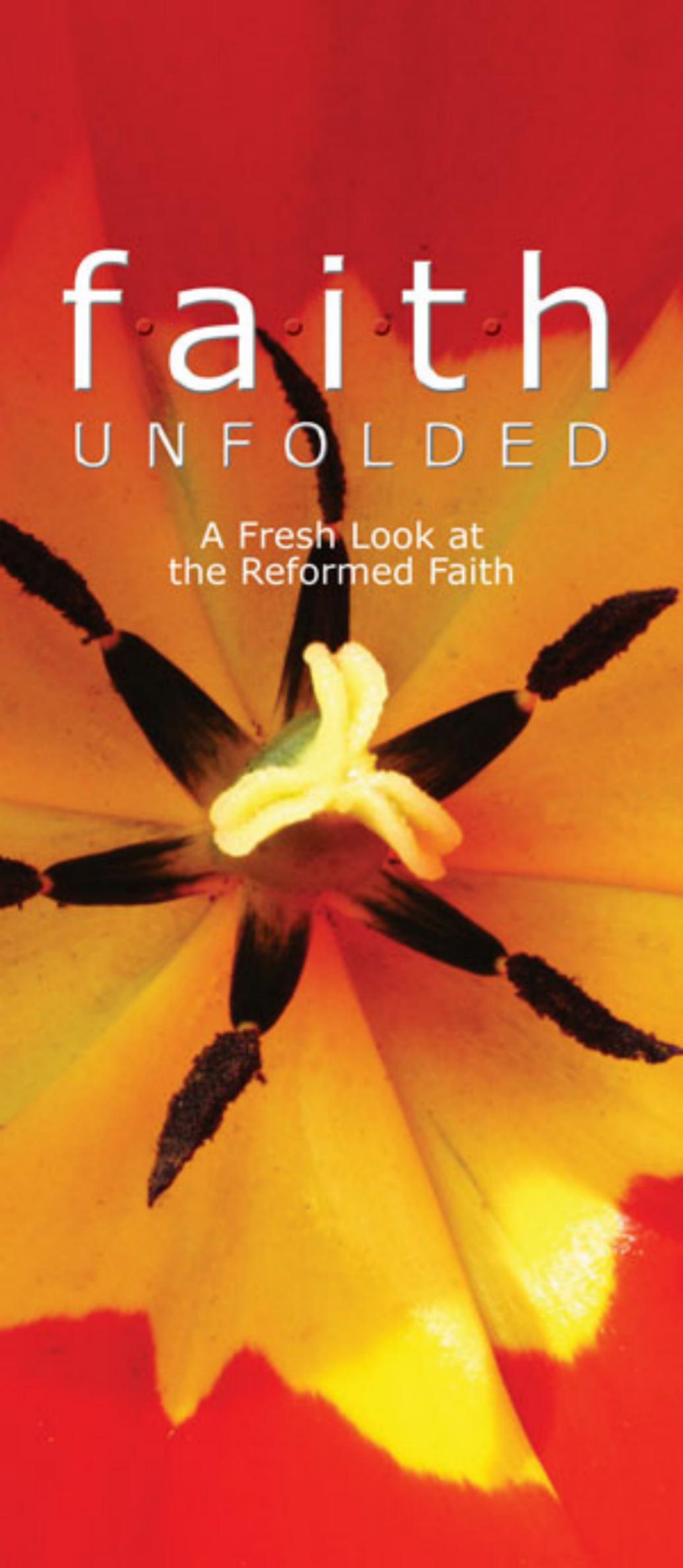
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faith

UNFOLDED

A Fresh Look at
the Reformed Faith



Fallen Humanity

(The Human Condition)

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins . . . (Ephesians 2:1).

The Bible teaches that all people everywhere are *fallen*. It means that all people, by nature, are spiritually dead. Completely dead. A person who dies physically is completely dead. So it is in the spiritual realm. The Bible says that by nature all people are spiritually dead—with closed hearts (Acts 16:14), darkened minds (2 Corinthians 4:6), closed ears (Matthew 13:9-17), and blinded eyes (John 9:35-41). Because we are completely dead, we are unable to believe in God without God's help.



Adopted by God

(The Father's Solution)

[God] chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ . . . (Ephesians 1:4-5, NRSV).

Humanity's fall into sin separated all people from God. But there is a solution. Before the creation of the world, God chose, or elected, some people to be members of his family. Even as an adoptive parent selects a child to love, God *predestined* some people to be *adopted* into his spiritual family.

This adoption is not based on anything a person is or has done. God's choice is not based on a person's faith, for those who are spiritually dead do not yet have faith (1 Corinthians 2:14). God chose simply "in accordance with his pleasure and will" (Ephesians 1:5).



Intentional Atonement

(The Son's Provision)

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:14-15).

Jesus, God's Son, is the only person who never sinned. As a sinless person, he was able to be the perfect sacrifice, to pay on the cross the death penalty for sin that satisfied the demands of God's justice. Jesus opened

the way for people to be reunited with God. His atonement on the cross was intentional—it was intended for believers from every people group around the globe (John 10:16).

Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient for the sins of all people, but it is applied only to those whom God has adopted. Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them . . ." (John 6:44). The Father draws people to believe in Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.



Transformed by the Holy Spirit

(The Spirit's Transformation)

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born again" (John 3:3).

Being "born again" or being born anew spiritually is the work of God the Holy Spirit. People are transformed by the Spirit. Regeneration (being "born again") is not a result of our placing our faith in Jesus. Regeneration precedes faith. It enables people to believe. Since people are spiritually dead, the Holy Spirit does for them what they are unable to do for themselves. The Spirit brings them to life spiritually. In fact, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit gives them the gift of life (Ephesians 2:8-9).



Held by God

(God's Preservation)

Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27-28).

Believers are held securely in God's grip. Their salvation is secure for all eternity. If their salvation depended at all on them, they would be in danger of losing it during a lapse of faith. But salvation, from start to finish, depends totally on God. Christians do not hang on to God; rather, they rest securely in God's loving hands.

The Bible says:

- "My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:29).
- "[Nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39).
- "[You who believed in Jesus] were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:13-14).

The joy and peace of the Christian life come from knowing that our salvation—from beginning to end—is completely the work of God.



F.A.I.T.H

Notice that these biblical facts have given us an acronym:

Fallen Humanity
 Adopted by God
 Intentional Atonement
 Transformed by the Holy Spirit
 Held by God

Use this acronym to remember that God is the complete Savior. This faith brings peace to life, security for the future, and all the glory to God.



Finally . . .

Things are not always as they seem. Think of the gate of heaven as having a wrought-iron arch overhead. As you approach the gate you read the words "Whoever Will May Come" and you decide to walk through the gate. Once inside you turn and read the arch from heaven's perspective: "Chosen from All Eternity." Those who believe in Jesus for their salvation realize that it is God who gives them faith and God who keeps them in the faith. They can take none of the credit. All the glory belongs to God.