

## THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

### The Holy Scriptures (6)

#### A. Introduction

1. Two things we are commanded to do as elders are to watch and to hold.

We are to watch what we believe, to make sure we are believing what God's Word says.

"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." (1 Timothy 4:16)

We are to hold firmly to the truths taught in God's Word.

"He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." (Titus 1:9)

It is vital we do these two things, not just for our own sake, but also for the members of this church and in fact those who live in the community God has placed us in.

To help us to watch and to hold, we're going to spend our elders' meeting working through the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith a paragraph or so at a time.

2. The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith begins with the doctrine of Holy Scripture.

The first paragraph is about the necessity of Scripture.

The second and third paragraphs are about the identity of Scripture.

The fourth and fifth paragraphs are about the authority of Scripture.

The sixth paragraph is about the sufficiency of Scripture.

3. If the Bible is sufficient to tell us how to live a life that is pleasing to God – that is, how to be saved, what to believe and how to live for the glory of God – it must also be clear.

The seventh paragraph is about the clarity or perspicuity of Scripture.

*"All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them."*

What do we mean when we say that the Bible is clear?

#### B. The clarity of Scripture does not mean that every passage is equally clear

1. Not every passage in the Bible is easy to understand.

*"All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves..."*

There are some parts that are difficult to comprehend.

"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." (2 Peter 3:15-16)

2. But what we need to know to be saved and to live as a follower of Jesus is clear.

*"...yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other..."*

With regards to the gospel, the Bible is so clear that even a non-Christian, without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, can understand it at an intellectual level after reading the Bible.

The clarity of Scripture does not mean that every part of the Bible is equally clear.

### **C. The clarity of Scripture does not mean that the Bible is equally clear to everyone**

1. Not everyone has an equal understanding of what God's Word says and means.

*"...nor alike clear unto all..."*

"The Levites... instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read." (Nehemiah 8:7-8)

"Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him... Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus." (Acts 8:30-31, 35)

Jesus has given to the church the gift of teachers who are able to understand and explain the Scriptures, so that His followers are equipped for works of service and built up in their faith.

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-13)

2. But everyone can understand what it says about how to be saved and how to live as a follower of Jesus.

*"...yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them."*

"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple." (Psalm 19:7)

"The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple." (Psalm 119:130)

Through private and public reading and preaching of Scripture (the ordinary means) anyone can gain a sufficient understanding of what Scripture clearly teaches.

The clarity of Scripture does not mean that every part of the Bible is equally clear to all.

### **E. How then shall we lead?**

1. We should encourage the flock to read the Bible.

Although there are some passages which are hard to understand, the Scriptures are clear enough that with the help of the Holy Spirit and a bit of effort (actually reading and thinking about what you read), there are lots of parts they can understand themselves.

2. We should encourage the flock to listen to Bible teachers.

Those able to teach are a gift to the church from the Lord Jesus and should be learned from.