

THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

God and the Holy Trinity (1)

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 are spending our elders' meeting working through the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith a paragraph or so at a time.

2. After establishing that it is the Scriptures alone which teach us everything we need to know about God and how to be saved by and live a life that pleases Him, the Confession moves on in Chapter 2 to deal with the subject of God.

The first paragraph is about who God is and what He is like.

"The Lord our God is but one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of Himself, infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who is immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, every way infinite, most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and withal most just and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty."

Here is a summary of what the church has always believed regarding God and is the most important of subjects.

"Those who know your name will trust in you." (Psalm 9:10)

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." (A.W. Tozer)

The first part of the paragraph deals with God's existence and His being.

B. Behold our God – His existence

1. The Scriptures affirm that 'The Lord our God is'.

Nowhere do they attempt to prove God's existence.

"In the beginning God..." (Genesis 1:1)

Instead they reveal who God is.

"The Lord our God is but one only living and true God."

2. He is the one and only God.

"Hear, O Israel: 'The LORD our God, the LORD is one.'" (Deuteronomy 6:4)

In a world where people worship a variety of different gods, we have this declaration that there is only one God, which means all other gods are no gods at all.

Only God possess Godhood.

3. He is the living God.

"Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell; they have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats." (Psalm 115:3-7)

All the other so-called gods are not living nor have they ever lived.

4. He is the true God.

He is true because He does exist, whereas all the other gods are false because they do not.

C. Behold our God – His being

1. What is this one only living and true God like in His being?

"...whose subsistence is in and of Himself, infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto."

2. He is self-existent.

"God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." (Exodus 3:14)

God does not need anything outside of Himself to exist, whereas everything outside of God depends on God for its very existence.

God needs nothing and is all-sufficient.

3. He is infinite.

God has no limitations, whereas everything outside of God has limits that have been placed upon them by God.

4. He is incomprehensible.

"Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no-one can fathom." (Psalm 145:3)

God cannot be fully known and understood by anyone but Himself.

This doesn't mean we cannot know God accurately and truly – God has made Himself known to us.

But because we are finite and God is infinite, we cannot know anything about God exhaustively or fully.

5. He is spirit.

"God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24)

God is invisible – He cannot be seen.

God is without body – He is not a physical being consisting of matter or material.

God is without parts – He is a simple being rather than a complex being who can be divided into parts. Every attribute that is true of God is true of His whole being.

God is without passions – He is not "*literally subject to mood swings or melancholy, spasms of passion or temper tantrums*", rather He is constant and unchangeable.

6. He is immortal.

"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 1:17)

"God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no-one has seen or can see. To him be honour and might for ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 6:15-16)

God has no beginning and no end, He was and is and to come, unlike humans who though their souls have no end, they do have a beginning.

D. How then shall we lead?

1. We should lead from a posture of worshipping God.

Worship is the right response to beholding this God as He has revealed Himself to us.

Before we are elders we are worshippers.

2. We should lead from a posture of humility before God.

How amazing it is that we can know this God through Jesus – that God has made Himself known to us in a way we can understand.

How amazing it is that we can approach this God through Jesus – that God invites us to come to Him and depend upon Him in all things.