

THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

God's Decree (3)

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. In Chapter 3, the Confession's focus is God's Decree.

In the opening two paragraphs we see that God has decreed all things that come to pass and He has decreed all things before they come to pass. Everything that has and is and will take place happens because God has decreed it.

In paragraph 3 and 4 the Confession then narrows its scope to the eternal destinies of men and angels. God has chosen to save some people not all people from their sins and He has chosen to leave some people not all people in their sins.

The next paragraph concerns those that God has chosen to save – those who are predestined to life – and the reason why it is that some people are saved from their sins.

"Those of mankind that are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving Him thereunto."

It is because of God's choice and God's grace that some are saved – that we have been saved.

B. It is because of God's choice

1. The reason that we have been saved from our sins is because God chose for us to be.

"For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

"Those of mankind that are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory..."

2. When was this choice made?

"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." (Ephesians 1:4)

This choice took place before the creation of the world, that is, in eternity past – before time itself.

It was then that God put together a plan to save a vast number of people.

3. Why was this choice made?

Because He wanted to – He has His reason but this has not been revealed to us.

Because it pleased Him to – He did not make this choice begrudgingly.

“In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.” (Ephesians 1:11)

C. It is because of God’s grace

1. The reason that we have been saved from our sins is because we have been given God’s grace.

“...hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving Him thereunto.”

“God who has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.” (2 Timothy 1:9)

2. There is not anything about our condition that caused God to choose us.

“He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.” (Titus 3:5)

God’s choice was not based on any merit in us.

God’s choice was not based on any good work we would do.

God’s choice was not based on our future choosing of Him.

God’s choosing is unconditional. There is nothing in us or about us that caused Him to choose us.

“For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.” (Romans 9:15-16)

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.” (Ephesians 2:4-5)

God loves those He has saved because He loves those He has saved.

For reasons outside of us, God has chosen to us from our sins.

D. How then shall we lead?

1. Let us take no credit for our salvation.

Because it is based on God’s choice and God’s grace, to take credit for something God has done is to rob Him of His glory.

2. Let us glorify God for our salvation.

Because it is based on God’s choice and God’s grace, salvation begins with Him and not us, so He deserves to receive all our praise.

“He chose us in him... to the praise of his glorious grace.” (Ephesians 1:6)