

THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

God's Decree (4)

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.

So far in this chapter of the Confession, we've seen that God has decreed all things that come to pass and He has decreed all things before they come to pass. Everything that has taken place and is taking place and will take place happens because God has decreed it.

The Confession then narrows its scope to focus on the eternal destinies of humans, and we see that 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, and that it is because of God's choice and God's grace that some are saved.

In paragraph 6 we are reminded that not only is God's plan to bring His elect to glory, but that His plan involves a specific way of bringing His elect to glory.

"As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so He hath, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto; wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation; neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only."

How does God save those He has chosen?

B. It is the work of Christ to accomplish salvation for the elect

1. Salvation did not take place in eternity, but in time and space.

When God marked out before the creation of the world those He had chosen to save, they had not yet been saved.

"As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so He hath, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto..."

There is a difference between God choosing to save someone and Him actually saving them.

Without Christ's saving work, the elect like those who are not elect, remain fallen in Adam.

2. Salvation was only accomplished when Christ came in time and space to live a righteous life and die in the place of sinners.

"wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ"

"For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him." (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10)

Without the work of Christ to accomplish salvation, God's plan to save the elect, could not take place.

It is only by, and with, and in Christ, that all the blessings of salvation come.

3. But, how is salvation applied to those who are elect?

C. It is the work of the Spirit to apply salvation to the elect

1. The work of Christ was to accomplish salvation, and it is the work of His Spirit to apply that saving work to those who have been marked out for salvation.

"...are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by His Spirit working in due season..."

Though many hear the gospel, it is only those who are elect that will be effectually called by Christ as His Spirit enables them to respond in repentance and faith.

"But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth." (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

Included in God's plan to effectually call to faith in Christ those He has marked out for salvation, is also the time when this will happen, and when it does, this call will not go unheard, or be ignored or resisted.

2. The Spirit not only calls the elect to faith in Christ, He also applies to them the blessings and benefits Christ has secured for His people.

"...are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation."

"And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." (Romans 8:30)

Those the Spirit calls are justified so that those who are elect are now declared righteous.

Those the Spirit calls are adopted so that those who are elect are now welcomed into God's family.

Those the Spirit calls are sanctified so that those who are elect are now set apart for God.

And those the Spirit calls will persevere until the end because they are kept by God from falling.

"...who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5)

D. How then shall we lead?

1. By exalting Christ as the Saviour of sinners.

This should make us preach Christ and Him crucified because it is through the gospel that Spirit calls the elect to faith in Christ.

2. By depending on the Spirit who calls sinners.

This should make us prayerful because without the Spirit's call, the elect would not come to Christ.