

THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

Creation (2)

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. God's Decree, the focus of Chapter 3 in the Confession, are executed in the works of creation and providence.

In Chapter 4, the Confession discusses the work of creation, beginning with an overview of creation in paragraph 1.

We learn here, that the world was created by the Triune God, to display God's glory, in six days, and very good.

The next two paragraphs concern the creation of humans.

"After God had made all other creatures, He created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, rendering them fit unto that life to God for which they were created; being made after the image of God, in knowledge, in righteousness, and true holiness; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfil it, and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject to change."

"Besides the law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures."

What do we learn?

B. We have been created male and female

1. We are created beings.

We owe our existence to another.

"After God had made all other creatures, He created man."

Though, in creating human beings, God saved the best until last, we are still created beings.

God is our Creator and we are His creatures.

2. We are created male and female.

"He created man, male and female."

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27)

Although because of the Fall, there are a small number of cases, where it not clear whether a person has been born male or female (intersex), this is not a reason to minimise the distinctions between men and women.

Men and women are equal beings.

Yet there are real differences between men and women and this is very good.

C. We have been created different to the rest of creation

1. We have been blessed with reason.

We have the ability to think and make decisions based upon what we know.

"with reasonable... souls."

2. We have been blessed with immortality.

"with... immortal souls."

We were created with a soul which is immortal.

"The dust returns to the ground it came from and the spirit returns to God who gave it."
(Ecclesiastes 12:7)

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28)

The death of a human's body is not the death of their soul.

Once God has made a soul, it is immortal from that point forward.

"The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." (Genesis 2:7)

D. We have been created in the image of God

1. Both men and women have been made in the image of God.

"...being made after the image of God, in knowledge, in righteousness, and true holiness."

"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (Genesis 1:26)

2. What does it mean to be the image of God?

Men and women are those that visibly resemble God (Image means replica; Likeness means looks like something else).

There at least 3 ways that humans are like God.

a) Dominion – humans were created to reflect God by exercising rule under God over the creatures that God had made.

"You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas." (Psalm 8:6-8)

b) Knowledge – humans were created to reflect God by knowing all that they needed to know (including what was required of them).

“...and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” (Colossians 3:10)

c) Righteousness and holiness – humans were created to reflect God by being righteous in thought, word and deed.

“...and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:24)

“As a prophet man was endowed with the physical senses and mental ability to learn the truth. As a priest he possessed the sensibility and desire to worship God in true holiness. And as a king he possessed the physical and mental power and ability to subject in righteousness all things to the purpose and will of God.” (G. I. Williamson)

3. Men and women continue to be in the image of God following sin’s entry into the world.

“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness.” (James 3:9)

The image is however distorted and now needs to be renewed by the Holy Spirit.

E. We have been created for communion with God

1. Men and women were created to enjoy communion with God.

To enjoy fellowship with God in whose image they were made, by keeping His law.

“...rendering them fit unto that life to God for which they were created.”

2. God’s law was written on them.

“...having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfil it, and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject to change.”

Before the Fall, Adam and Eve had a perfect knowledge of what God’s standard of right and wrong was and had the ability to live accordingly. But they were capable of disobeying God’s commands.

Since the Fall, the knowledge of God’s law remains, but this knowledge is now impaired, and we no longer have the power to keep it perfectly.

“(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them).” (Romans 2:14-15)

3. God’s law was given to them.

There was a specific command that God needed to make known to them, which concerned one of the trees in the Garden of Eden.

“Besides the law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures.”

“And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17)

So long as they kept this command they would continue to enjoy communion with God.

F. How then shall we lead?

1. We are to affirm that dignity of all people as those made in the image of God.

All forms of murder (including abortion and euthanasia as well as slander) are sinful and wicked.

All forms of discrimination whereby a person is treated as being of less value than another, for example, because of race, age, ability, along with bigotry are sinful and wicked.

2. We are to affirm that men and women are equal but different.

There is no place for treating anyone as being inferior or a second-class citizen because of gender.

Yet there are God-given roles and responsibilities that are different for men and women (e.g. within marriage and in the church).

3. We are to affirm that we were created for relationship with God.

As Question 2 of The Baptism Catechism states:

Q: What is the chief end of man?

A: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.