

THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Fall of Man, Sin and its Punishment (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. In Chapter 6, the Confession moves on to discuss the Fall, sin, and its punishment.

Already we've seen that sin is part of God's decree in Chapter 3 and is within the scope of His providence in Chapter 5.

Yet God is not and never will be the author of sin, and nor does He approve of it.

The discussion of sin in Chapter 6 begins with the historical event of the Fall in the first paragraph.

"Although God created man upright and perfect, and gave him a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it, and threatened death upon the breach thereof, yet he did not long abide in this honour; Satan using the subtlety of the serpent to subdue Eve, then by her seducing Adam, who, without any compulsion, did wilfully transgress the law of their creation, and the command given to them, in eating the forbidden fruit, which God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel to permit, having purposed to order it to His own glory."

3. The paragraph begins with a reminder of what the situation was like before the Fall.

"Although God created man upright and perfect, and gave him a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it, and threatened death upon the breach thereof, yet he did not long abide in this honour..."

God created people in His image who were holy and righteous.

"God made mankind upright." (Ecclesiastes 7:29)

Adam and Eve were to enjoy the blessing of relationship with God as they showed their devotion to Him by their dependence upon and obedience to Him.

To test to see whether they really did trust and obey Him, God gave to them the command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

"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)

If they kept this command they would live forever.

A failure to trust God by obeying His righteous law would bring death – spiritual, then physical, and then eternal.

The 'covenant of works' is the phrase that is sometimes used to describe God's promise of life to Adam if he obeyed His command, although it is not used here in the 1689.

"Like Adam, they have broken the covenant – they were unfaithful to me there." (Hosea 6:7)

Adam and Eve were in the best position to pass the test (living in the Garden, made in God's image, given a clear instruction).

Yet they didn't.

Why did Adam and Eve fall from this state of uprightness and perfection?

The Confession gives two answers.

B. The Fall took place because Adam did not trust and obey God

1. How did the Fall happen?

"Satan using the subtlety of the serpent to subdue Eve, then by her seducing Adam, who, without any compulsion, did wilfully transgress the law of their creation, and the command given to them, in eating the forbidden fruit..."

Satan deceived Eve.

"Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (Genesis 3:13)

Satan gave Eve many convincing reasons why she should disobey God's command and eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and she was unable to see what he was doing.

"...you will be like God..." (Genesis 3:5)

"...good for food..." (Genesis 3:6)

"...desirable for gaining wisdom..." (Genesis 3:6)

Eve then seduced Adam.

"She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it." (Genesis 3:6)

"The man said, "The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." (Genesis 3:12)

Eve somehow convinced Adam that he should join her in disobeying God, and he did.

2. Why did the Fall happen?

Adam did not trust God – He chose to believe Satan at the encouragement of his wife over God.

Adam did not obey God – He chose freely to rebel against the law of God; He was not coerced to go against His own will when he ate the forbidden fruit.

C. The Fall took place because God allowed it to happen

1. God knew that the Fall was going to happen.

It did not come as a shock to Him.

He chose to create people with the capability of sinning.

He chose to allow people to actually sin.

"...which God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel to permit, having purposed to order it to His own glory."

God was pleased to permit the Fall to take place.

Why? Because...

2. God displays His glory by allowing the Fall to happen.

He shows His justice – without the Fall we would not have known His hatred of sin and His wrath against sinners.

"But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed." (Romans 2:5)

"What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath – prepared for destruction?" (Romans 9:22)

He shows His grace – without the Fall we would not have known the richness of God's mercy.

"What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory." (Romans 9:23)

"For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all." (Romans 11:32)

He shows His wisdom – without the Fall we would not have known manifold wisdom of God through His salvation of sinners.

"Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33)

D. How then shall we lead?

1. Watch out so that we are not deceived.

"But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3)

Don't be duped or taken captive by false teaching that lead us away from living lives devoted to Christ.

2. Watch out so that we do not deceive.

"Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly." (2 Timothy 2:14-16)

"Do not have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful." (2 Timothy 2:23-24)

Don't get involved in those things that will not equip the members to live lives devoted to Christ.