

THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Fall of Man, Sin and its Punishment (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 6, the Confession discusses the Fall, sin, and its punishment.

The first two paragraphs cover the historical event of the Fall and what the tragic effects of that event for humans are.

Then in the third paragraph we have an explanation as to why all mankind sinned when Adam sinned and what that means for us.

In the final two paragraphs we see what the effects of being born sinful are both before and after someone becomes a Christian.

"From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions."

"The corruption of nature, during this life, does remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself, and the first motions thereof, are truly and properly sin."

B. Before someone becomes a Christian they are sinners who sin

1. We sin because we are sinners.

"From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil."

We have evil intentions.

"The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done." (Genesis 8:21)

We are unable to do good because everything we do is outside of faith, which means it is filthy in the sight of God and sinful.

"Everything that does not come from faith is sin." (Romans 14:23)

"As it is written: "There is no-one righteous, not even one; there is no-one who understands, no-one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no-one who does good, not even one." (Romans 3:10-12)

"The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." (Romans 8:7)

We are unable to seek God.

"No-one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:44)

"No-one knows the Son except the Father, and no-one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (Matthew 11:27)

2. What does this mean?

It is not the case that, though we are born sinful, we want to and are able to please God.

No, because we are born sinful, we do not want to and are totally unable to do anything that is pleasing to God.

We sin because as sinners we want to sin.

"From this original corruption... do proceed all actual transgressions."

The life of sin is a result of being born in a state of sin.

The sins we commit are not accidents or mistakes but expressions of our heart's desires.

"But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (James 1:14-15)

"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander." (Matthew 15:19)

Actual sins, therefore, are a result of original sin.

C. After someone becomes a Christian they remain sinners who sin

1. Those who put their faith in Christ are saved from the penalty and power of sin but are not immediately delivered from the presence of sin.

We remain sinners who sin.

"The corruption of nature, during this life, does remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself, and the first motions thereof, are truly and properly sin."

This truth is seen in the examples we have in Scripture of God's people sinning.

This truth is also seen in our own experience of struggling with sin even though we have been saved by Jesus.

"For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want." (Galatians 5:17)

"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members." (Romans 7:18-23)

"We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check." (James 3:2)

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us... If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives." (1 John 1:8, 10)

2. This is not an excuse for us to disobey God and sin.

"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One." (1 John 2:1)

But it is the reason why we often fail our Lord.

The good news is that if we confess our sin, the sins we continue to commit as believers will be forgiven.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

And if we are Christians, we will confess our sins and seek with the help of the Spirit to put them to death in our lives.

"For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." (Romans 8:13-14)

D. How then shall we lead?

1. We should not be surprised when non-Christians sin.

It is their nature to sin.

It is their desire to sin.

This will not change unless they are regenerated and respond in faith to Christ's offer of salvation in the gospel.

And this should stop us from being disappointed when non-Christians don't behave as Christians as hard as we might try to persuade them that obeying God's Word is the best way for them to live.

2. We should not be surprised that Christians (including ourselves) continue to sin.

This should cause us to grieve the sins we continue to commit.

This should cause us to be gracious toward others knowing that they are not perfect.

This should cause us to be grateful that Christ died for our sins.