

# THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

## God's Covenant (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 7, the Confession is summarising the Bible's teaching on how people relate to God, which is by way of a covenant.

The first paragraph reminds us that because God is the great Creator, it is our duty as creatures to obey Him without any expectation of reward for doing so.

If that's the case, how then can humans be blessed/rewarded with life [glorified state with God], when obedience is doing our duty?

The answer is that a covenant is the means by which God blesses those He has made with the reward of life.

Without God establishing a covenant, there could be no relationship with Him other than that of Creator-creature.

God graciously did this first, when He offered Adam life if he trusted Him by obeying the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But Adam disobeyed, so now humans are not just creatures but sinners whom God must punish with death.

Yet wonderfully, as paragraph two states, it is still possible for people to have a relationship with God because He has made a covenant of grace.

The covenant of grace is God's plan to save sinners from their sin and the wrath of God against them and to give to them eternal life.

Though this covenant of grace does offer salvation to all people, it only guarantees salvation to those who are God's people.

The final paragraph of this chapter tells us more about this covenant of grace.

*"This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament; and it is founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect; and it is alone by the grace of this covenant that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever was saved did obtain life and blessed immortality, man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms on which Adam stood in his state of innocency."*

## **B. The covenant of grace was made in eternity**

1. In eternity past a covenant was made.

This covenant sometimes called the 'covenant of redemption', was made between God the Father and God the Son.

It forms the basis for the covenant of grace.

*"...and it is founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect..."*

2. In eternity past, the Father and the Son agreed to save the elect from their sin and the wrath against them and to give to them eternal life.

The Father promised to give a people to His Son as His inheritance, and the Son would willingly come into the world to accomplish their redemption.

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

"...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)

"...a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time..." (Titus 1:2)

"All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast – all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world." (Revelation 13:8)

## **C. The covenant of grace was revealed in history**

1. The covenant of grace made in eternity was made known progressively in history through the gospel.

*"This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps,*

The gospel was first preached by God to Adam and Eve in the curse given to the serpent after the Fall.

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15)

Then step by step, over time, through the covenants made with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and to God's people through the prophets, further light was shed on this promise of salvation made in the covenant of grace.

"the covenants of the promise" (Ephesians 2:12)

2. What is revealed in the covenants?<sup>1</sup>

God promises Noah that He will restrain His wrath.

God promises Abraham that He will bless His people.

God promises Moses that He will make His people holy like Him.

God promises David that He will rule over His people as their King forever.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from tweet by Garrett Kell [<https://twitter.com/pastorjgkell/status/930080218894815239>]

God promises God's people in the New Covenant announced by the prophets that He will forgive their sins and given them a new heart.

#### **D. The covenant of grace was established in Jesus**

1. Only when Jesus came to earth do we see the covenant of grace clearly displayed, as He accomplished all that was necessary for the promise of salvation made in eternity and revealed in history to be kept and then enjoyed by His people.

*"...until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament; and it is alone by the grace of this covenant that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever was saved did obtain life and blessed immortality, man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms on which Adam stood in his state of innocency."*

2. Without the covenant of grace being established in Jesus there would be no way for sinners to be saved.

All who are saved, before and after Christ's coming, are saved by the promise made in the covenant of grace.

Either through faith that God will keep His promise in Christ or through faith that God has kept His promise in Christ.

It is the only way.

"Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

#### **E. How then shall we lead?**

1. We must preach the Law.

We are to call all people everywhere to repent of their sin against God's law.

"In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31)

2. We must preach the Gospel.

We are to call all people everywhere to believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved.

"He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household." (Acts 16:30-31)

We do this knowing that all the elect will be saved.

"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48)