
How then shall we lead?

We need to acknowledge that this state of innocence is hard to comprehend because it is so alien to us.

We do not know what it is like to have no corruption in our will and no inclination to sin.

We must affirm that though humanity was created holy and righteous, no one has been created holy and righteous since Adam and Eve.

No one is born with the freedom and the power to choose either to sin or to not to sin.

“Indeed, I was guilty when I was born; I was sinful when my mother conceived me.” (Psalm 51:5)

Everyone is in desperate need of God’s gift of grace in the gospel.

THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

Introduction

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 (1 Timothy 4:16).

We are to HOLD firmly to the truths taught in God’s Word (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, in our elders’ meetings, we are reflecting on a paragraph from the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, which is an excellent summary of what we are to believe.

Chapter 9: Of Free Will

Paragraph 2

Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which was good and well-pleasing to God, but yet was unstable, so that he might fall from it.

The focus of Chapter 9 of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith is the human will.

In paragraph 1 we were reminded that every person has been created by God with a will that is free to choose, and able to act upon the choice that their will has freely chosen to make. This means that we are responsible and will be held accountable by God for every choice we make.

Our will is free to choose what we want to choose, and we will always choose what we desire the most. We are not forced to make any of the choices that we do.

The rest of Chapter 9 looks at four states of human nature and how the will is affected in each of them, beginning in paragraph 2 with the state of innocence.

Man, in his state of innocency...

When God created man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, he was in a state of innocence.

“Only see this: I have discovered that God made people upright...”
(Ecclesiastes 7:29)

Innocence does not mean neutrality, but without sin and without guilt before God.

His mind, heart, and will were holy and upright.

“...and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator.” (Colossians 3:10)

“...and to put on the new self, the one created according to God’s likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.” (Ephesians 4:24)

In this state of innocence, his will was capable but also changeable.

A will that was capable

Adam had a will that was capable.

...had freedom and power to will and to do that which was good and well-pleasing to God.

His will was free to choose and able to choose to do what was good, and what pleased God.

He had no corruption in his will, nor did he have any inclination to do what was evil.

He knew God’s law, loved it, and was able to keep it.

If Adam had remained sinless, which for a time he was, as he tended the Garden of Eden and ruled over the animals, he would have been rewarded with eternal life for himself and all humanity.

A will that was changeable

Adam had a will that was changeable.

...but yet was unstable, so that he might fall from it.

His will was not fixed. It had the potential to change.

As well as being free and able to choose to do what was good and pleased God, he also was free and able to choose to do what was evil and displeased God.

His will could both choose to sin and choose not to sin.

He could choose to disobey God and act on that choice by actually disobeying God.

If Adam sinned, it would be entirely his choice to do so. He would be fully responsible for his actions.