

1689 Second London Baptist Confession
Introduction, Part 2

- Primer Questions.
 - What would you say to someone who says that confessions are not biblical? What would you say to someone who says: “I have no creed but the Bible?” (This is a Cambellite statement, not a Baptist one.)
 - What would you say is the use and value of a confession of faith? How do you think they should be used in the church?
 - What would you say to those who say that a church’s confession of faith should only include things that are necessary to believe for salvation, that we should only have a confession that includes the very basics of the gospel?
- What does the Bible say about Confessions of Faith?
 - The Old Testament. The Shema of Israel. Deuteronomy 6:4 says, “**Hear O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.**”
 - The Jews recognized this as a confession.
 - The Rabbis developed a tradition in which every Jew was required to recite it twice a day. This was also recited in the Synagogue worship.
 - It was not a prayer, but a statement of what they believe.
 - The New Testament. The NT explicitly speaks of confessions. The GK word “**to confess**” means to speak in agreement.
 - Romans 10:9-10 says, “**If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.**”
 - Many times, this basic statement, “Jesus is Lord” is made throughout the NT.
 - Scholars believe this is the most fundamental confession of NT believers.
 - In 1 John 4:2 is a test of orthodoxy, “**By this you know the Spirit of god: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.**” 1 John 4:15 says, “**Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.**”
 - In 2 John 7, to deny the confession is a denial of orthodoxy. “**Those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh, such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.**”
 - So you see that there is a positive and a negative. You must confess orthodoxy.
 - And you must not fail to confess orthodoxy.
 - A confession in the Bible involves the mouth, the heart, and the whole life.
 - It’s not just a matter of saying things with the lips. It has to do with what you really believe.
 - Your life proves what you really confess. The thoughts you think and the life you live and the values you have ARE your confession, no matter what you say with your mouth.
 - Now this is important. One of the things we see in the church is that as error is fenced out in the NT, the Christian confession expands. New words are required to address new errors in

the church. And the errors that have emerged never leave us.

- In 1 Cor 8:5-6, we have an interesting combination of the confession that there is one God, **and** one Lord, Jesus Christ.
 - The basic Jewish statement that there is one God is affirmed by Christians. That is a point where Jews and Christians agree.
 - But because the Jews rejected Christ and some Jews were influencing Christians, now the confession needs to expand beyond confessing that there is “one God,” and it needs to say that there is “one Lord.”
- The same thing happens in 1 Timothy 2:5. Paul says there is “**one God and there is one Mediator between God and men, the man, Jesus Christ.**”
- Eph 4:4-5 also adds to the Jewish Shema and says there is “**One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**” Notice again the unity of the Christian faith under one God and one Lord.
- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 has an early church confession. Paul says, “**For I delivered to you as of first importance, what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.**”
 - So, notice that this confession has three elements. Christ died. He was buried. He was raised.
 - So, do you see that the confession is expanding?
 - We’ve already seen that there is one God and there is one Lord.
 - And now, we see that the church needed to elaborate on who the “one Lord” is. So, they confessed: Jesus died. Jesus was buried. And He was raised on the third day.
 - Now there are five elements of the confession.
- 1 Timothy 3:15-16 puts the confession at the very heart of the church. Paul says he is writing that “**you may know how to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. Great indeed we confess is the mystery of godliness: ‘He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, and taken up in glory.’**”
 - Notice that as soon as this speaks of how we are to behave in the church, it mentions a confession. This is a great confession.
 - And notice that one of the responsibilities of the church is to be a “pillar and buttress” of the truth. That means the church is to declare and defend the truth of the Word of God.
 - This verse is a strong argument for the necessity of a confession of faith at the heart of a local church.
 - Churches must confess to behave properly.
 - And they must declare and defend the confession.
 - Notice that this confession has seven elements. Christ’s birth. Christ’s resurrection. Witnessed by the angels. Proclaimed among the nations. Believed among the nations. And ascended into heaven.
 - So, do you see what we have here? The confession of faith in the church is

continuing to grow.

- The early church had to face all sorts of theological errors. It had to face Judaizing tendencies. It faced Gnosticism. It faced asceticism. Paganism.
- And what we find in the Scriptures is that the church's confession grew in response to each of these errors.
 - It needed to assert that Christ is Lord, contrary to Judaism.
 - It needed to assert the humanity of Christ, contrary to Gnosticism.
 - It needed to assert the sufficiency of Christ's saving work, contrary to asceticism.
 - And it needed to assert the oneness of God, contrary to paganism.
- And probably the high point of the church's confession is the book of Romans.
 - Romans is probably an example of what Paul taught when he taught the whole counsel of God. Paul had never been to Rome and he was laying the foundational doctrine in a church that he had never visited.
 - And if you study Romans carefully, you'll see it's a systematic summary of the doctrine of the whole Bible.
- Look at Romans 16:17. It says, **"I appeal to you brothers to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught: avoid them."**
 - Now, it's important to realize that this verse is that it comes at the end of Romans.
 - So, in light of the fact that this verse comes at the end of the book, what is the **"doctrine that you have been taught?"** The doctrine is everything Paul taught them in the whole book of Romans.
 - And Romans is an encyclopedia of theology. Just think about the doctrines it teaches.
 - Romans 1 and 2 teach the doctrine of the fall and sin. And that all are condemned under the law of God.
 - Romans 3 and 4 teach the doctrine of justification by faith alone.
 - Romans 5 teaches the doctrine of the federal headships of Adam and Christ.
 - Romans 6-8 teach the doctrine of sanctification.
 - Romans 9-11 teaches the doctrine of election.
 - And Romans 12-16 teach about life in the church, submission to authority, Christian liberty, and missions.
 - Romans is a large doctrinal treatise. And Paul says that if anyone creates divisions or obstacles any of these doctrines, then **"avoid them."**
 - Now it's important to understand what Paul is saying here.
 - He's not saying to avoid people who don't understand everything in Romans.
 - He's not saying that you have to understand and affirm everything in Romans to join a church.
 - He is saying that the book of Romans is the doctrinal goal of the church.
 - Therefore, anyone who causes divisions over anything in this book should be removed.

- And anyone who creates obstacles or stumbling blocks to understanding anything in this book should be removed.
- It's a doctrinal high bar, not the low bar. It's a summary of the whole of the church's teaching. That's how all confessions should function in the local church.
 - All that's required for baptism and to join a church is simple faith in Jesus Christ.
 - But no one in the church may cause division or create obstacles to anything in the church's confession of faith.
- So what we see from Romans 16:17 is that a faithful church confession is encyclopedic.
 - It covers a wide range of doctrines, the whole counsel of God. Scripture teaches that a church must confess the whole faith.
 - Some argue that a church's confession should be minimalistic.
 - That is, churches should only confess the bare minimum of what is required to be saved.
 - But that would violate what we're seeing here in the Bible. The church is required to confess its understanding of the whole Bible in summary. Romans was a summary of the whole Bible.
- Look at what Paul tells pastor Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:13. **“Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.”**
 - Notice that there is a **“pattern of sound words.”** There is an organized system of biblical instruction that Timothy heard from Paul.
 - In another place, we see that Paul is jealous to teach the whole counsel of God.
 - Look at Acts 20:24-27. READ. Notice that Paul is called to be a minister of the gospel. But he is innocent of their blood because he teaches the whole counsel of God to them.
 - If we don't get secondary doctrines right, like election and baptism, then we risk compromising the gospel too. All the secondary doctrines of the Bible support the gospel itself.
 - So, we see that there is a whole pattern of sound words that we are to teach. Notice that this pattern is not identical with the Bible. It's a way of teaching the Bible that doesn't just repeat the words of the Bible.
 - Look at Romans 6:17. It says, **“But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.”**
 - Now this is important. It does not just say they had become obedient to the Bible, or to the Word of God. It says you have obeyed a **“standard of teaching.”**
 - The Greek word “standard” here could be called “form” or “pattern” or “manner.” Literally, the word is “type” or example. The Bible is not just a type or example. The Bible is itself divine teaching. The Bible is not a form of teaching.
 - This is speaking of teaching about the Bible. Paul is talking about human words used to explain the Bible.

- This is not teaching that merely reads the very words of the Bible without explanation.
 - Paul is saying that the Romans were obedient to a standard of teaching that arose from the Bible.
 - So, here is what we must conclude. If we want to be obedient to the Scriptures, we must confess in human words what the Scripture teaches in God's words.
 - We must use human words to express God's Word.
 - The Bible commands us to do this. And that is in fact what we do every Sunday, when we preach the Word. We use human words to express God's words.
 - Some people say that they are not "confessional." But that's like saying I don't believe in preaching or teaching. It's like saying I don't believe the church is responsible to express what it believes the Bible means.
- Still someone might ask, "well, why don't we just use the book of Romans as our confession of faith?"
 - Well, the book of Romans is an example of the kinds of things Paul would say when he was teaching the pattern of sound words.
 - But the problem is that people through the ages have mishandled and misinterpreted Romans.
 - Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons have ways of twisting the words of Romans.
 - So, we have to use new words to correct the ways people have mishandled God's Word.
 - The question is, "What does Romans mean?" And the moment you start to answer that question, you are using words other than the Bible. And you have a confession of faith.
- And the church throughout history has sought to answer that question, and as it did, the church's confession grew and grew.
 - In the first several hundred years of the church, it was dealing with the question "What books make up the Bible?" Many were rejecting the 66 books of the Bible. Marcion denied the OT is God's Word. The Gnostics were trying to add to God's Word.
 - So, the church confessed what the Bible itself teaches: that there are 66 books in the Bible.
 - And the church's confession grew.
 - In the 300's the church was dealing with the question, "What is Christ's relationship to God?" And heretics like Arius said that Jesus is just a glorified man. But Athanasius said, "No, the Bible teaches that Jesus is God." And the church wrote the Nicene Creed, which clearly asserts that Jesus shares the same divine nature as God. So, the confession of the church grew some more.
 - Then in 400's the question became, "What is the nature of mankind?" Pelagius argued that human beings have the ability to do whatever God commands. They aren't that sinful, Pelagius said. But Augustine said, "No, the Bible says that human beings can't do anything God commands unless God gives them the grace to do it." And then the church confessed this doctrine at the Council of Organge.
 - Then in the 1500's the question became, "Can human beings save themselves by their works?" And Luther and Calvin said, "No, the Bible says that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone." And the confession of the church grew some more.

- So to summarize what we've learned.
 - First, the church must confess what it thinks the Bible means.
 - Second, the Bible teaches the church needs an encyclopedic confession of faith. We need a large confession that explains the whole counsel of God.
 - Third, we've learned what it means to subscribe to the confession. All that is required for Baptism and church membership is simple faith in Jesus Christ. But church members must not cause division or create obstacles or teach contrary to what the church confesses. Church leaders need a firm and full affirmation of the confession because the Bible teaches that they have to be able to enforce discipline according to the church's confession.

- Why is a confession of faith important?
 - First, it gives us a definable theological identity. A question we ought to ask is "Who are we?" and "Why are we here today in the building on the Lord's Day?" We are here because we believe the Bible teaches us to be. And on the sign outside, it says, "First Baptist Church." But what is a Baptist? To some it means "Bible thumper," or "Fundamentalist," or "Redneck." But our confession of faith gives a definition to exactly what it means to be Baptist.
 - The Confession gives us an Identity of Five Things.
 - It's an orthodox statement. It puts us into the broadest stream of Christianity. The 2000 year old language of Chalcedon and Nicea is embedded into our confession.
 - It's a covenantal statement. It differs from the dominant view of Baptists and Baptist churches, which is dispensationalism.
 - It's Calvinistic. But a better way to put that would be to say that the confession is predestinarian. That is God unconditionally chooses whom He will save. It denies that any true believer can lose his faith, but that God keeps all of His own to the end.
 - It's Puritan. It's not anabaptistic, pietistic, but is Puritan. It has the characteristics of English Puritanism, which emphasize the greatness of God, the grace of God, and the need for personal holiness that conforms to the law of God.
 - It's both Baptist and Independent. It teaches believers baptism, not in an Episcopalian, but in an Independent view of church government.
 - This is the identity of our church and of all who hold the Second London Baptist Confession.
 - Second, it gives us a framework of inter-church fellowship. This was the original purpose of the Second London Baptist Confession. To show their unity with the Presbyterians and Congregationalists of England.
 - Third, it gives an opportunity for inter-church catholicity. Because the confession is orthodox in its statements, it allows for the acceptance of the Christian nature of other churches. We can ask and answer whether other churches are orthodox.

- What is the use of a confession of faith?
 - They help maintain unity among members and ministers.
 - They help guard Scriptural truth against error.
 - They provide a standard of orthodoxy for church office bearers.
 - They candidly bear witness of our church's biblical convictions to other churches and to the world.

- They provide a unified and systematized expression of the whole Bible for the instruction of believers.
- They are useful in public worship.