

Why Does TCC Exist?

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We finished a couple of weeks ago a series on Ephesians 6 and later this month we're going to go into a little bit of a study of the book of Jeremiah in consideration of the dying nation in which we live, Jeremiah ministered at such a time like that. And so, we're in the middle, you're visiting us in a hinge point, so to speak, in our pulpit and we're doing some things within the life of our body to, as we have new people coming, to help understand and explain why Truth Community Church exists. At the end of this month, we're going to have another membership class and if you're interested in learning more about our church, we invite you to attend that. There's no obligation or commitment to become a member simply by attending the class but it's an opportunity to get to know some of our folks and to understand more behind the scenes what it is that we do and why we do it.

The message last week and this week are designed to support that emphasis on church membership. What we have to say today is just a little bit technical. It is very essential for you to understand because as we go through these things today, you are going to understand why Truth Community Church exists. If it weren't for those things which I am about to speak, we wouldn't even bother, you know, we would all go someplace else, but we believe that the Lord has a unique purpose for Truth Community Church and we want to explain why that is and what that is, the idea being this and there's, you know, there's a little bit of a separation that takes place on things like this, for people who come and hear these things and say, "But that's not what I'm about. That's not what I'm interested in. That's not what I'm committed to." Well, then it gives you the opportunity to say, "Well, maybe this isn't the place for you." You know, and there's no shame in that. There's no difficulty with that. We understand our church isn't for everyone but for those who hear the things of which we're about to speak and say, "That is everything that I'm about. That's what's in my heart. As I know Christ and as I respond to his word, these are the things that I believe. I support that. I embrace that. That's what I want my life to be about also. This is the kind of place that I want to not only be a part of, I want to publicly identify with the purposes of this church because I believe that these are the things that God has revealed and made known in his word."

And the vehicle that we're using to discuss that is the whole area of a Confession of Faith. Last week, we explored why a church should even have a Confession of Faith, why a church would lay forth the things that it believes in a detailed document at all. Last week we saw why it is so important for a church to have a detailed Confession of Faith, today

what we're going to do is explain why we use the particular Confession of Faith that we do at Truth Community Church. It's the London Baptist Confession of 1689. It was a Confession that was written 331 years ago and today we want to explain why we use this particular Confession and as we see these things, it will help you understand why our church exists. Why does Truth Community Church do what it does? Why do we rally together? Why do we come together? This explains and helps you to understand that. You see, it's easy and I've never wanted to be a church like this where you come in and you just have a vague sense of, "I'm not sure why the things that happen here happen." I don't want anyone to be in that position that comes to Truth Community Church on a regular basis. I want people to be able to articulate in their own mind, "This is what our church stands for and this is why it does, and I understand why I am here." And we make no apology at Truth Community for this fact, is that we exist for reasons that are transcendent, that transcend our individual lives. They transcend our individual purpose. They transcend the time in which we live. We live and exist as a church for things that are beyond us, that transcend us and yet our lives the Lord has allowed to intersect with these things.

And so we'll see this as you understand and as I explain to you why we use the 1689 Confession. There are four reasons that I'm going to give to you and the first one is this: there is a theological reason. There is a theological reason that we use the 1689 Confession and in the easiest and simplest form that I could explain is this, is that we believe that the 1689 Confession is an accurate summary of the teaching of the Bible. We use this Confession because we believe that it accurately summarizes the teaching of the Bible.

Now it's very important to remember what we said last time, is that the Bible is the supreme and final authority in the church of Jesus Christ. That has always been the case. It will always be the case. There is no new revelation beyond the 66 books of the Bible. But as we said last week, we have to ask a question: what do we understand the Bible to teach? It's a big book. It's written by 40 authors over 1,500 years. It takes a lifetime of study to really start to grasp it in something of its breadth and depth and how do we do that and how do we go about that? Well, we believe that the 1689 is a summary of what the Bible teaches.

Here's what you need to understand: I am greatly simplifying a process, a system of thought in a few words here so that you would understand the way that this works. We study the Bible. We realize and the Spirit places within our heart a conviction that the Bible is the word of God and because we believe that, because we've been redeemed by the blood of Christ, we read God's word to understand what he has revealed about himself, about us, about Christ, about sin and about salvation, and we read and we study these things because we're drawn to the word of God, we believe it to be true and we know that it is in the word by which we grow in the grace and knowledge of our salvation.

Well, as we read and study, we find that our understanding as we do that is expressed in the words of this Confession. So let me give you three illustrations about how this works.

I'm going to read a passage of Scripture and then give you a quotation or a reference from the Confession of Faith. So we ask this question: what does the Bible say about itself? What does the Bible teach about itself? Turn to Paul's letter, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. So remember what we're doing here, we're explaining the theological reason that we hold to the 1689 Confession. We believe that it accurately summarizes biblical teaching and we're looking at a couple of examples to help us see that. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the Bible says about itself that,

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Scripture says that it is a product of being breathed out by God. It is the very word of God. The Spirit of God came upon the writers of Scripture and guided them, protected them from error, used their personality, used their vocabulary, used their circumstances so that in that circumstance their human words were guided by God in such a way that what they wrote was the very word of God without error and expressing fully exactly what God would have them to say, and so when we read the Bible, we are reading the very word of God himself.

Now what does our Confession say about the Bible? Here's one line among many from chapter 1 of the Confession. It takes the teaching of Scripture and summarizes it in a way that is brief, that is direct, that is to the point that we can understand the significance of what we just read in 2 Timothy 3. Our Confession says, chapter 1, point 1, it says,

The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.

And so we've looked at Scripture, we see what it says about itself and we see this Confession expressing it in modern language and affirming the sufficiency, the certainty, and the infallibility of the word of God. There are those and the reason that this is important is that there are those who would look at these words from Scripture and mitigate against its inspiration to say that only parts of it are inspired, that only those things that teach about faith are inspired, and that's twisting the text that we looked at. Well, we find in 1689 a summary of what we believe and what our hearts tell us is true about Scripture and that's why we use the 1689 Confession.

Now moving along, covering a lot of territory here today. What does the Bible say about God? What does the Bible say about God? Well, we're just using representative texts, of course, because the whole of Scripture tells us about God, the whole of Scripture is a revelation about the Lord Jesus Christ, and so we can't say everything that needs to be said in 60 seconds like this, but in 1 Timothy 1:17, you can look there with me. Again, this is just a sample, it's just one example. In 1 Timothy 1:17 it says this, it says,

17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Scripture tells us that God is eternal, he is immortal, he is invisible because he is a spirit. Well, what does our Confession say in chapter 2 about the nature of God? It says,

The Lord our God is but one only living and true God; infinite in being and in perfection.

And so, here again, I just want you to see the pattern. These are just illustrations. We go to the word of God, we read it, we study it, we come to understand it, and we find this Confession expressing the very thing that we believe to be true. That's why we use this Confession.

One more. I had others in my notes but I'm skipping them for the sake of time. We're staying in 1 Timothy here. What does the Bible say about Jesus Christ? What does the Bible say about the Lord God Incarnate? Well, one thing that it says in 1 Timothy 2:5 is this, it says,

5 ... there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

Scripture tells us that all men are born into sin. Every one of you was born into sin in a condition of separation from God. The Bible tells us that if you die in that condition, God will judge you and send you to eternal damnation in hell. That means that you and I, we all need a Savior, we all need a Redeemer. And who is that Redeemer? The Bible tells us that it's Jesus Christ. God became a man in order to go to the cross of Calvary to redeem us from our sins, to offer his life as a sacrifice pleasing to God, acceptable to God that would by a blood sacrifice, a human blood sacrifice, human sin would be washed away for everyone that would believe in him. That's what the Bible teaches.

Well, what does 1689 say about Christ? Chapter 8 says this,

It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the mediator between God and man.

Beloved, a little bit of a tangent here. When we say "the mediator," there are positive and there are negative implications to that statement. When we say that Christ is "the mediator," it means that there are no others, and when you make a statement like that, it means that all of the efforts to go to God, to approach him through Mary, through the saints, through other means, through other religions, through other prophets, all of those religions are by definition false. They are leading people to hell because there is only one mediator and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. That is foundational. That is essential. There is not a church without that truth. What I mean by that is there is not a true church unless they are teaching that, and if they are contradicting that, they are manifesting the work and doctrines of demons. Now the Confession helps us express that succinctly, quickly, clearly in the language that we find written there.

Now that's the theological reason. I want to summarize something for you here. What I have just done is a gross over-simplification of the whole process. It is a terribly brief and superficial treatment of it but we're not trying to do everything here today, we're simply trying to explain and to communicate that there is a theological reason why we hold to this Confession, we believe it is an accurate summary of what the Bible teaches. It helps us in our teaching task to communicate what the truth is and – follow this – as I said last time, a church that has a detailed Confession of Faith is exercising integrity toward the public and toward the people of God. We are making plain, we are putting out on the table, "This is what we believe." We are not hiding anything. You can read it for yourself and find what it is that we stand for which is different from simply telling people to read their Bibles because you and I know that there are all kinds of different conflicting interpretations about the Bible. And so the question is, "Okay, I get that, you say you believe Scripture. Good, so do Jehovah's Witnesses, so do Mormons to some extent, so do Catholics, they add a whole lot of other stuff onto it, but tell me what you believe. Don't just tell me to read the Bible, tell me what it teaches so that I can know if your convictions match with mine." And that's what a Confession does, it is a summary of the theology that we believe the Bible teaches and therefore what we teach. We study Scripture and we find 1689 expressing our views, okay?

Now I've been wanting to say these things for, like, eight years. I wrote a summary of these things eight years ago and finally I'm saying them from the pulpit. I feel a great sense of relief in being able to say these things. Now as you and I come together, as we come together this morning as you contemplate whether Truth Community Church might one day be your church home, what we're saying is this, is that Truth Community Church exists to proclaim and defend that truth to the public, to the people of God, and to instruct its people in it. That is why we exist and what I want you to see is this, is that I am so very grateful to God for the relationships that exist in our body, for the fellowship that takes place as you get to know each other and as you encourage and strengthen one another with your words and your service and your deeds of kindness to one another, I'm so grateful for that and that is an essential part of church life, but what we need to understand corporately as a body is that we exist for purposes that exceed and transcend the horizontal dimension of our human relationships. We are not essentially a social club. We are grateful for the social aspects of fellowship in the life of the body of Christ, but we exist for far more than that. We exist to proclaim the truth that is revealed in Scripture and to propagate it, to teach it to our children, to teach it to each other, to teach it to anyone who will listen by whatever means the Lord gives us to extend that. And so we exist to defend and proclaim this truth that we believe the Bible teaches and that is more than the sum of the horizontal relationships that take place within. There is a transcendent purpose in the existence of Truth Community Church that we recognize and that we assert without apology, okay?

That's the theological reason. Now secondly and I'm leaving, obviously, I'm leaving out whole broad planes of theology in what I'm saying. You get the point, we're talking in illustration here, not exhaustively. Secondly, and I love this point as well, there is, secondly, a historical reason that we use the 1689 Confession and this is – oh, this is so important, this is so important to grasp, especially in the spirit of the age in which you

and I live today. We must understand this, is that the Bible, the Scripture is distinct from the spirit of our age. Our age says that everybody can have their own truth. You have your truth, I have my truth. Truth is relative. It's not absolute. Morality can change and shift as public opinion changes and the spirit of our age says that's alright. Well, Scripture says the exact opposite. Scripture is distinct from the spirit of our age and says that truth is unchanging, and while the opinions of men may change, the word of God does not deviate from itself. The word of God is true.

Now beloved, listen to what I am about to say very carefully because it will help you understand while we are using a century's old Confession as opposed to something that we've drafted ourselves or something that was created and written in the course of our lifetime. It was a conscious, deliberate choice that we made at the beginning of our church life. Understand this: in the spirit of our age, our age believes that innovation is progress, that a new idea is better than an old idea. One of the things that justified homosexual marriage in the Supreme Court decision five years and two and a half months ago was the fact that the millennia were wrong, we've learned new things and now it's time for something new to be imposed upon society, the thought being that this is better than what was already believed. A new toaster is better than the old toaster. A new refrigerator is better than the old refrigerator. A second edition of a book is better than the first edition of the book. And on and on it goes. You and I are so affected by that mindset that we don't even recognize the powerful impact that it has on us that something new is always necessarily better, scientific progress and so it goes, and so that the newer that something is, the better it is. People think that a new car is better than an old car. That's not necessarily true. You get the idea. Always something new.

Well, beloved, when you come to the teaching of Scripture, when you come to an area of truth, that is lethal. That is a very bad idea to have in your mind. God is eternal and unchanging and so is his truth. The book of Jude verse 3 says the "faith was once for all handed down to the saints," and biblical truth never changes, and we believe that when, for example, when the Reformation took place 503 years ago on October 31, when the Reformation took place essential truth was recovered, stated accurately in a way that is to be honored and upheld and not tampered with by subsequent generations. It was expressing the truth that was always contained in Scripture but was recovered from the darkness that had enveloped it in a thousand years of the Dark Ages and the ascension of the Roman Catholic Church.

Now you must understand this. You must understand this. Truth Community Church seeks historical continuity with Christian men whose teaching has stood the test of time and biblical scrutiny. We are not trying to invent something new here. I want you to turn to 2 Timothy 2 to see something very vital about this process and about what we are discussing here this morning. In 2 Timothy 2:1, Paul's final letter before he was soon put to death by the Roman Empire, speaking to Timothy who was taking up the mantle, not as a new apostle but as, you know, the next generation after the apostle, Paul said to Timothy, he said,

1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2
The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many
witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others
also.

Now beloved, Paul just in the genius and brilliance that can only come from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul just set forth a four generational pattern of how truth is to be handed down without change from generation to generation. First generation: Paul. Second generation: "Timothy, you heard these things from me." So there's Paul, first generation, Timothy, second generation. "Timothy, you entrust these things to faithful men," third generation, "who will be able to teach others also," fourth generation. This is to be handed down, preserved and kept in purity, in sincerity, and kept unmixed from error and deviation and change because the faith was handed down once for all to the saints.

Now listen, that has implications. Not every good Christian church sees this point exactly the way that we do, but there's a reason why we hold to a Confession that was written 331 years ago and even at that, the 1689 Confession was built off the earlier Westminster Confession of 1646. If this history is new to you, don't worry, you know, just stay with the bigger point. The 1689 Confession written off the 1646 Confession and here's what you must understand, is that when these Confessions were written centuries ago, they were the collaborative effort of many many men. Many men contributed and participated and agreed with the expression of truth found in these documents. 1689, the Reformed Baptists came along and said, "We see a few things differently but we affirm large sections of it, and so we'll just adapt what Westminster said and then add our own perspective on issues like baptism." Here's what you and I need to understand. To me this is of great profound importance for us to understand, is that the truth that we stand for and the truth that we are proclaiming has been tested and has stood the test of time for many centuries. It was expressed by many men at the time and it has been studied and tested by men since then, and now we stand in the subsequent generations of those who have received it.

Now that has a significance for you. This is how I would encourage you to think because when the pastor of Truth Community Church stands up and teaches, we are not asking you to simply take it on the word of one man. You can look and see that what we teach from the pulpit is consistent with the Confession that we freely publish and you say and you recognize that there is the work of many generations of men who have said the same things. Compare that to, beloved, you must get this point. I know I'm emphasizing that but you must get this. Compare that to the spirit of our age where any knucklehead that claims to have gotten a new revelation from God can get up and teach it and gather a following around him even though it has no continuity with historic Christian truth. You tell me which is more likely to be true, the new knucklehead on town or the teaching of Confession that has been affirmed by multiple multiple men over multiple multiple centuries? The answer should be obvious. We're not teaching anything new here. We're not claiming any new revelation. We're simply trying to teach and to hand to you the faith

which has been handed down from God once for all, interpreted by faithful men and passed down through generations.

Now in one sense, a church, we, we could write our own Confession but why would we do that? Why would we do that? Using an earlier Confession of Faith makes this point, it makes this point, that the faith that we teach here at Truth Community Church is the shared faith of other people in the church both today and throughout centuries. We're not standing alone. We're not a spiritual Lone Ranger here. We are in the sphere of consistent historic Christianity with what we are saying and we are not ashamed of that even in an age which places a higher value on innovation, on things which are new. Whatever may be true in the realms of appliances, we should not import that into the realm of spiritual truth because that is deadly. The spirit in which we hold our faith is this, we realize that great men over the course of centuries have studied Scripture. Some of them, like William Tyndale, paid for their faith with their life. We realize that Martin Luther stood alone against an institution and knowing that his life was at stake and called upon to recant his works, said, "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen. I will not recant. I cannot recant," he said. And the great courage, the great courage of these men is what enables us to have it today. We think that that is a heritage noble and worthy of staying true to, staying consistent with rather than going our own direction. One of the reasons that we hold to a historic confession in this church is it is a way of acknowledging that we honor the historic nature of Christianity, that it is our desire, it is our effort, it is our commitment to stand in the stream of historic Christianity and not just be out doing our own thing someplace. We realize that that's contrary to the spirit of the age in which we live. We're glad for that. We embrace that. That is part of the reason that we do it, is that we oppose the spirit of our age rather than being drawn along and swept along with it. There is a historical reason for it. Faithful men have taught us the apostolic doctrine. We feel like we owe it to our Lord to stand in their stream. Truth Community Church exists to honor that trust which has been given to us and Truth Community Church exists to the best of our ability in dependence upon the help of the Holy Spirit, we exist to pass that on unchanged to others.

So here I am, a man approaching 60 years old which is hard for me to believe, but the calendar doesn't lie. Part of what we are doing here is that as we teach these things, there's something implicit that we are saying to those who are 20 something, who are 30 something, we're saying, "Here it is," and we are laying down the exhortation, the encouragement, the prayer that you would pick it up and carry it forward in the years forward after we're gone, and that you would do what we have done, what others have done before us. We are the inheritors of those who have been faithful. We're trying imperfectly to do the same thing and in what we do and in the Confession we hold, we are calling upon you young people to do the same thing, to be faithful to what has been given to you, to one day be those who teach it to others who will also be faithful. Going back to what I say, therefore you see that this has a transcendent purpose. We look back and receive this body of truth that's been given. We exercise our abilities in defense of it for a time and then we look forward to the future, we hand it off, as it were, with the prayer that those who have come behind us will do the same thing. It transcends you and me, transcends our individual problems in life. There is a body of truth to be faithful to,

there is a Christian heritage to be faithful to and we're just an insignificant link in a greater chain started in eternity past, revealed through the prophets, Christ and the apostles, extending on until Christ returns. That's why we do what we do and we think the 1689 Confession helps us express that priority.

Thirdly. We've said there's a theological reason, a historical reason, thirdly, there is a polemical reason. A polemical reason and if that's a word that's unfamiliar with you, for something to be polemical, it's simply a teaching that challenges other ideas. There are a lot of other ideas out there and we exist to challenge those ideas. Now that has a specific, local, geographic import for Truth Community Church that isn't necessarily the same for other churches that hold to 1689. Our Lord, our gracious loving Lord for whatever reason has chosen to raise up Truth Community Church in the Cincinnati area. The Cincinnati area is a matter of common knowledge, is a region with a long history of Roman Catholic influence, a long history of Catholic influence and Catholic schools and Catholic churches and all of that. Well, unlike some other Statements of Faith which are worthy and which are important in their own right, but the 1689 Confession is explicit on rejecting Roman Catholicism and that distinctive is crucial in the city in which we minister. The 1689 Confession if you're interested in these citations, you send me a note and I'll be happy to share them with you. I'm not going to give you chapter and number from the Confession on these particular points. But the 1689 Confession says Christ is the head of the church, not the pope. The 1689 Confession says that the Communion service is a memorial, not a reflection of the Catholic Mass and a re-sacrifice of Christ. The 1689 Confession rejects the doctrine of purgatory that is taught falsely by the Catholic Church. There are other examples, these are just illustrations. So we have in this area that has been dominated by Catholic influence historically, we as a church, we embrace having a Confession that says we are self-consciously Protestants. We do not view the Roman Catholic Church as some kind of sister denomination, we view them as an evangelism field. We view them as those who are apart from Christ and need to come to saving faith under the sound of the Gospel, of faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone, to the glory of God alone, based on Scriptures alone. 1689 makes those statements in a way that not every Confession does, and because that's strategic and important for what we do here in our locality, we believe that 1689 is the right Confession for us.

And beloved, those assertions that the pope is not the head of the church, that the Mass is not a true sacrifice of Christ, that Catholic tradition is not equal to the Bible and on and on it goes, those assertions, these things of which we speak here, you must understand this also, there's a lot to understand here, is that these negative assertions toward the Catholic Church clarify, define and separate a false gospel from the true Gospel revealed in Scripture and that's no small consequence. In Galatians 1, you can turn there with me, Galatians 1:8 it says that,

8 ... even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

You see, my friends, for a religious body, a religious organization, I don't want to dignify it with the scriptural word "church," for a religious body to teach a different Gospel than that which is revealed in Scripture is a matter of great eternal consequence. We minister in an area that has been under the prevailing influence of a false gospel for I don't know how long, 150 years or more? Well, if that's the case, then we need a Confession of Faith that makes a clear statement against that so that the lines are drawn, so that the boundaries are set. We understand that a Roman Catholic, a practicing Roman Catholic could never come and be a member of our church. We think that's a good thing because it testifies that there is a difference in teaching that must be understood that has great eternal significance and consequence, and that is a third reason why we exist as a church, and it is a third reason why we hold to the 1689 Confession. We exist to protect men in the faith of biblical truth. We exist to protect, to whatever extent we can, men and people and thought from Roman Catholic influence and 1689 is an expression that helps us to do that.

Now fourthly, finally. We've seen a theological reason, a historical reason, a polemical reason, fourthly, there is a pastoral reason that comes down into the area in which you and I live. The 1689 Confession shows keen insight into the nature of Christian living. Turn over to the book of Philippians. Let's do it this way, Philippians 2 and 3. We'll be getting to these passages hopefully before the end of the year. Philippians 2 in verses 12 and 13 and for those of you that came in with discouraged, struggling hearts this morning, this is a word especially for you in the midst of everything technical that we've said here. The nature of our Christian experience is often difficult. We're fighting a spiritual battle, Ephesians 6. We have indwelling sin in our hearts. We have a world that is opposed to us. We have relationships that go sour. We struggle with our sins and temptations and sometimes we stumble in a way that would be embarrassing if it were public knowledge. Scripture speaks to us in the gentleness of Christ and helps us understand what's going on. Philippians 2:12 says,

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Scripture tells us, Scripture expresses to us that our spiritual growth is not perfect. We've become a Christian but that does not make us spiritually perfect. That means that we're subject to sin, we're subject to temptation, sometimes we're going to stumble, sometimes we're going to have a lot of sin to confess to our holy God and Redeemer. Scripture tells us to expect that. Scripture comes along and even in the words of the Apostle Paul in chapter 3, verse 12 of Philippians, look at that with me, he says,

12 Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

He emphasizes the point. He says,

13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

He openly states as he does in more graphic detail in Romans 7, "I am a man who I find that evil dwells in me. The things that I wish I did consistently I don't do, the things that I wish I avoided sometimes I do them, and I find then there is this conflict within my soul as a believing man struggling against temptation and sin." And Scripture comes and tells us that that's what the process is like.

Now in the 1689 Confession, we find this sympathy for people like you, people like me, when we falter in our spiritual growth. 1689 says this, it says sanctification is imperfect in this life. There abides still some remnants of corruption in every part. Now beloved, think about the significance of that. You have this heart that longs to obey Christ and yet you fall and stumble along the way. The thundering of the law does not come at that point to condemn you, Scripture comes and says your perfection awaits your arrival in heaven when you'll be glorified. In this life there's work to be done, there's a struggle in it, there's effort and sometimes there's failure and even significant failure along the way. We understand that Christ came because we're sinners. We understand that Christ is sympathetic to his people, that when we confess our sins he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and our hearts are encouraged and we don't give up and we don't fall into despair because we understand that Scripture says this is sometimes what sanctification looks like, and we find our encouragement in that. So there's this pastoral help that comes and says, "Oh, I don't need to give up. I just need to get up and get back on the road, on the walk of sanctification."

Beloved, let me remind you that even in the midst of our stumbling faltering walk, that Scripture says that you can have an assurance of salvation. The Apostle John said in 1 John 5:13, "These things I have written so that you know that you have eternal life." There are many in the Arminian camp, certainly in the Catholic camp that deny the reality of the assurance of salvation, that say it's a bad thing even, that you should not think that you are assured in your salvation because if you do you will live carelessly. There's a whole lot of bad thinking that's wrapped up in that but what I want you to see is that Scripture, Christ himself comes to you and declares through his word that he would have you with an assurance of salvation, that you would know with certainty that you belong to him, and that assurance gives you comfort and strength in the midst of the spiritual battles that you face. Well, we find in our Confession these words: those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus may in this life be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace. You may be certain that you belong to Christ and he will never take away your salvation from you. That is the foundation upon which we live and breathe. "I am His and He is mine in a love that will not cease. I am His and He is mine."

Well, beloved, that matters to the way that you live life in times of discouragement. That matters when you stumble. That matters when you strayed from the path. Rather than

approaching Christ with a sense of craven fear that he's had it with you, that he will cast you away, Scripture comes and says, "The one who comes to Me I will never cast out." And our Confession emphasizes that in what it says, and at the same time gives us this word of encouragement. For those of you that struggle with, you say, "I believe in Christ but, man, do I struggle with assurance of salvation." There's a word for even someone like you. In the words of our Confession a true believer may wait long and encounter many difficulties before he has assurance. You can be a Christian and yet have doubts about whether you really are and God has grace and mercy and would have you grow into that rather than your doubts being an indication that you're not saved at all.

So beloved, our Confession helps doubting believers find insight into the nature of their life and into the nature of assurance, and Truth Community Church exists to help people like you find strength in Christ. We are not here to be your life coach. We're not here to simply give you wisdom in how to get a better life, better prosperity, better health. It's not about that. It's about helping you walk in a spiritual way with your Lord Jesus. That's why our church exists. 1689 is a subordinate means that helps us do that.

So, phew, I don't know about, I needed a breath there. That's a lot to cover in an hour. There are theological reasons, there are historical reasons, there are polemical reasons, there are pastoral reasons that explain why Truth Community Church exists and why Truth Community Church uses that Confession of Faith. Now let me say this in closing and by way of invitation, kind of a twofold invitation here as we wrap this up. Understand this, beloved, we claim absolute inerrancy and infallibility for the Bible. We don't claim that kind of perfection for 1689. There are points of differences that we might have with certain clauses, certain statements in it, and we give that freedom to people who join our church to say, "I see this point a little bit differently," on a secondary, not anything essential but on secondary matters. We are not claiming that this Confession of Faith is perfect like the Bible is. We don't claim perfection for it but you should see what we do is we affirm its direction. Not perfection but direction. This is going the right way. From the right history, going the right direction and that's why we use that Confession in the life of Truth Community Church. This Confession embodies the reasons that we exist.

So what does that have to do with all of you? Well, if you're new to our church, we've just kind of laid out why we exist to you. If you're interested and these things resonate with you, we invite you to our membership class on September 27. Right after the church, we just need you to sign up for it. Andrew will say more about that in his closing announcements, but if this sounds like what you live for, then, you know, it would be good for you to come to our membership class and see further about these things. I've spoken as though primarily to Christians, if you're not a Christian here this morning, I want to remind you of something far more important than the 1689 Confession to you. I'm pleased to remind you of what Scripture also teaches, that at the right time Christ died for ungodly people just like you; that Jesus Christ suffered on the cross to pay for the sins of his people and who are his people? It's those who would respond to his invitation, "Come to Me all you who are weary and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest." I invite you, my unsaved friend, my unsaved friend, young people sitting in the congregation, elderly people that have never responded to Christ, I invite you all. Just

more importantly, Christ invites you all to himself, to repent of your sin, to receive Christ by faith alone for the forgiveness of your sin that you might be saved from the wrath of God through him. This is why our church exists and we pray and trust that God will bless it to his great glory.

Let's pray together.

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done as in heaven, so also upon earth. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine and Thine alone is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. And God's people said: Amen.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.