

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 1 – “Of the Holy Scriptures”, Message # 15 –  
“God’s Witness to the Scriptures”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class,  
by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019.**

**Paragraph 4** – The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God.

2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1: 19-21; 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3: 16; 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2: 13; 1<sup>st</sup> John 5: 9

Last Sunday we looked at 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1: 12-21 and I gave you the proposition that –

**1. The Authority of the Scriptures rests upon the fact that God Himself, who is Truth itself, is the Author of it.**

We thought about the idea that no book of Scripture or portion of Scripture came into existence simply by the will of man. It was men who wrote the Scriptures but they did not simply decide on their own to begin to write the books of the Bible that they wrote. They were “moved by the Holy Spirit. It was God the Father who ordained that they write them, and it was God the Holy Spirit who Personally guided them into all the truth of what they would write. He was right there in their mind and heart with them, directly inspiring them, directly enabling them to know and to write down the very words that He would have them to write down, so that we would know the things that God the Father would have us to know; particularly about our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Savior of Sinners, and the One upon whom all of our salvation depends. Now today, I want to give you another proposition of truth and that is this:

**2. The Authority of the Scriptures further rests upon God’s witness and testimony to them.**

**1<sup>st</sup> John 5: 5-13** – “Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” “This is He who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood.” “And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.” “For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.” “And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.” “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.” “He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.” “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.”

Here we find the blessed truth that the Christian, the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, overcomes the world. Jesus Christ is the Essential Word of God. He came by water; that is He came, being borne witness to by John the Baptist, as being the Messiah, at His baptism. It was there that He was witnessed to by the Father who said – “This is My Beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased”, and it was there that He was also witnessed to, by the Holy Spirit who descended in bodily form like a dove upon him, it says in Luke 3: 22. But how do we know of

these things concerning Christ? We know them because they were written down for us in the Scriptures; in the gospels. And they are written down here by John in his 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle. Therefore we need to understand that God Himself bears witness to the truth of Jesus Christ as the Son of God in and through the testimony of the Scriptures. There are therefore, three that bear witness of Christ in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Spirit to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. Christ can and does bear witness to Himself. This witness was questioned by the Pharisees in John 8: 13 – “The Pharisees therefore said to Him, ‘You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.’” In John 8: 14 – “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come and where I am going.’”

Jesus could say these things because He was God made manifest in the flesh. He was and is, the Living and Essential Word of God who bears witness to the Scriptures Himself and therefore gives them authority and stands behind the truth as the ultimate authority, in His deity, with the other two Persons of the Godhead. In John 8: 16-18 He says – “And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me.” “It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true.” “I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.” This is how Christ spoke authoritatively concerning His own identity and the authority of the Scriptures; these great truth being witnessed to by the Father. If we receive the witness of a man of good character and reputation such as John the Baptist, the witness of God is even greater; indeed it is infallible. It is the witness which God has made concerning His Son, and we can say also, it is His witness concerning the Scriptures as well.

If we believe in the Son of God, it says in verse 10, we have the witness of the Spirit to the truth of the Scriptures, in ourselves. “He who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.” Where is this “testimony” to be found? It is found in the Holy Scriptures. If we do not believe it, we make God a liar. In verse 8 of 1<sup>st</sup> John 5, John says – “And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.” John Gill states that these three are – The Holy Spirit as He is the hearts of His people here upon earth, where he not only witnesses to the truth of their sonship, but also of the sonship of Christ.”

“By water is designed, not internal sanctification, which though an evidence of regeneration and adoption, yet not of Christ’s Sonship; but water baptism, as administered on earth in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and which is a noble and standing testimony to the proper, natural, and eternal Sonship of Christ. And by blood is intended not justification by the blood of Christ, but rather the blood of the saints, the martyrs of Jesus, who have shed it on earth, in testimony of their faith in the Son of God, and thereby sealing the truth of it; or rather the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, which is the communion of the blood of Christ; and represents that blood which was shed for the remission of sins, and has a continual virtue to cleanse from all sin, which is owing to his being the Sion of God.” “The three witnesses on earth seem therefore to be the Gospel, attended with the Spirit and power of God, and the two ordinances of baptism, and the Lord’s Supper.” (end of quote)

While I believe Gill’s interpretation to be conceptually correct enough in explaining verse 8, I believe that it is also possible that the word “water” refers to the word of God itself. Think for example of the passage in Ephesians chapter 5, and verse 25 – “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.” Certainly this “washing of water with the word” refers

to regeneration and sanctification of the believer taking place in their mind and heart, and certainly this holy activity of the Spirit is, in itself, a witness to Christ Himself, the testimony of the power and authority of the gospel in the word of God, as it is preached and read and lived out, becomes a testimony of God to the soul through the Scriptures. And also John 3: 5 – “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” The regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, taking the word as cleansing water, cleanses the heart in connection with the believer’s faith, and the Spirit thus bears witness through the word to the mind, the heart, and conscience of the believer, that this is true Christian experience. God’s witness is in the Scriptures and to the Scriptures in the believer’s experience.

And what I have just related to you is confirmed for us in verses 11 and following – ““And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.” It is the Scripture which John wrote down in this letter that tells us how we may know that we have eternal life. We believe in the testimony that God has given to us, that we have eternal life, and that life is in His Son, and it is from the Father, and through the Spirit’s working in our heart and life, not only at the beginning of our Christian life, but all through our Christian life.

This authority, our Confession states, does not depend upon the testimony of any man or church, but it wholly depends upon God, who is the truth itself and the author thereof. Men do have a witness to bear concerning the authority of the Scriptures, but it is not a great enough to establish the Bible’s authority as being God’s authority to declare the truth to us. If we receive the witness of men, it is not enough, because a man’s witness comes from his own observations and experiences relative to the Scriptures, and it may be flawed for 2 reasons. First, it may be flawed because it is subjective. And, 2<sup>nd</sup>, it may be flawed because any man we would consider in this process of evaluation is not infinite in wisdom or understanding. Indeed, all true wisdom and understanding comes from God Himself. It is not inherently to be found in any man. No, every person who would be saved, and every person who would follow the Lord in truth, must come to believe the witness of God that He has placed His authority in the very words of the Scriptures.

**Listen to Dr. William R. Downing** – “The Christian life is comprised of two aspects, objective and subjective.” “The objective is revealed in the truth of the Scripture as the standard of belief and conduct; the subjective aspect is our personal experience, which ought to derive from and reflect the objective aspect.” “Apart from Scripture, we would be left entirely with the subjective aspect.” “All would necessarily become relativistic (no final, authoritative witness except the strength of individual experience), empirical (all judgment would be based on experience alone), existential (completely subjective and tending toward irrationalism or emotionalism) and pragmatic (whatever seemed to work best would be right).” “Thus, the most emotional or mystical would be the most spiritual, and the strongest or most persistent personalities would determine the direction of Christianity.” “The only safeguard for such deviations is the Inscripturated Word of God rightly understood and correctly interpreted.”

He goes on to define what is meant by the “authority” of Scripture. He says – “The authority of the Scripture is the rule or government the Bible is to have over our total lives as the very Word of God.”

I believe that this is a good definition. The Scripture is God's rule for us to be governed by, and to live by. We see that the Lord Jesus Himself establishes this principle of truth as to how we are to view the Scriptures as the authority of God, in Christ's time of temptation in the wilderness with the Devil.