

# Deep Roots:

A Study Guide for the 1689 London  
Baptist Confession of Faith





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Confession of Faith***

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## Introduction

In 1845 when the Southern Baptist Convention convened for the first time, every single church represented adhered to a confession consistent with the London Baptist Confession of 1689. In 1858, the Southern Baptist Seminary was established with a document based on the London Baptist Confession. Southern Baptists have been confessional from the beginning.

Being confessional means adhering to a historic statement of faith. Of course, we live in an anti-institutional age, so creeds and confessions are seen as oppressive. After all, we like to do our own thing without restriction.

Occasionally, someone will say, “We have no creed but the Bible.” This is meant with good intentions, reflecting a deep commitment to Scripture over and against any other source. And, to be sure, Scripture is the final authority on all matters—a position that most confessions take seriously. But “no creed but the Bible” has serious problems. A. A. Hodge responded well to this line of thinking when he wrote:

*Men must interpret to the best of their ability each particular part of Scripture separately, and then combine all that the Scriptures teach upon every subject into a consistent whole, and then adjust their teachings upon different subjects in mutual consistency as parts of a harmonious system. Every student of the Bible must do this, and all make it obvious that they do it by the terms they use in their prayers and religious discourse, whether they admit or deny the propriety of human creeds and confessions. If they refuse the assistance afforded by the statements of doctrine slowly elaborated and defined by the Church, they must make out their own creed by their own unaided wisdom. The real question is not, as often*

*pretended, between the word of God and the creed of man, but between the tried and proved faith of the collective body of God's people, and the private judgment and the unassisted wisdom of the repudiator of creeds.*

So, there's no such thing as no creed. It's only a matter of which creed. The Church has cherished creeds and confessions from the earliest days. We even find several in Scripture. But it must be said that creeds and confessions are not independent authorities. Their authority is only derivative from Scripture. Adhering to a confession means believing that *that* confession faithfully represents the teaching of Scripture. At this point, one major benefit of a confession should be noted. Many people want to know what the Bible teaches, and pastors are constantly encouraging congregations to read Scripture regularly. But Scripture can be challenging, daunting, and down-right confusing. A confession functions a bit like a roadmap. It keeps us from getting lost in the difficult parts and helps us see the big picture and where everything comes out.

What follows is a study through the London Baptist Confession of 1689 (LBC). It is rich piece of theology that will repay careful study. Some parts will be new. Some parts will be difficult. But, hopefully, each will drive us to greater praise. Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

### **A Note on the Format:**

The LBC is laid out in articles. The first article is titled "The Holy Scriptures." We can think of these as chapters. Each chapter has paragraphs. These are also numbered. So, 1.1 refers to article 1, paragraph 1.



Each chapter in this study guide begins with an introduction to the articles to be addressed. Following the introduction is a key passage of Scripture. After this are a series of questions for study, reflection, and discussion. At the end is a catechism question from the Baptist Catechism that was created to correspond with the LBC. Catechisms were historically used by Christians to train believers in sound doctrine. These questions provide a means for you to remember the key element and also to teach others.



## Chapter 1: The Holy Scriptures

The LBC begins with a statement on Scripture. This is because Scripture serves as the only stable source of revelation. We cannot know God accurately by relying on reason, emotions, or tradition. The eternal God cannot be grasped by finite minds. But God willingly made himself known by accommodating himself in our language. John Calvin likened this reality to baby talk. God lowers himself to categories we can understand. Theologians refer to this as “special revelation.” It is distinct from the marks of God in creation, for example. These are aspects of “general revelation.”

The Scriptures, so the LBC states, “are the only sufficient, certain, and infallible standard of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.” In Scripture, we have a stable source of truth. We have a final standard to differentiate between right and wrong. The books that make up Scripture are referred to as the canon (1.2). The canon is a rule or standard. In other words, only the books found in the canon are authoritative. This differs from the Roman Catholic Church, which has a few additional Old Testament books. Protestants reject those books as authoritative (1.3).

While good arguments can be made for receiving these books as God’s word, it is ultimately the internal work of the Holy Spirit that compels us to greater trust in Scripture (1.4–5). The LBC states that Scripture is sufficient, providing us with everything we need to live a life pleasing to God (1.6). Scripture is clear (1.7). Theologians call this the “perspicuity” of Scripture. Difficult parts of Scripture are clarified by clearer parts (1.9). Because Scripture is the final standard, it is the final source of authority (1.8, 10).

**Key Passage: 2 Timothy 3:15–17**

1. Why do you think the confession begins with a statement on Scripture? What is the implication of this? (see 1.1).
2. What sources of knowledge do we sometimes turn to? How are these inadequate?
3. What three *unique* descriptions does 1.1 give for the Scripture?
4. How do the limitations of the canon encourage faith and reading (1.2–3)?
5. How should we respond to Scripture (1.4–5)?
6. What qualities describe Scripture (1.6–7)?
7. When reading a difficult passage of Scripture how can clarity be achieved (1.9)? Does this mean a conflicting interpretation is ever valid?
8. How would you define commitment to Scripture?
9. How does this summary compel you to worship the Lord? Consider his kindness in preserving the Scriptures for our benefit.
10. What are the practical implications of article 1 in the LBC? For the individual? For a local church?

**Q. What is the Word of God?**

**A. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Word of God, and the only certain rule of faith and obedience (Baptist Catechism Q. 4).**

## Chapter 2: God and the Holy Trinity

“God-talk” is a common part of public discourse in America. The problem with much God-talk is that it’s astonishingly vague. Which God are we talking about? What is God like? One prevalent problem is that we construct a God that fits our understanding. We give God the attributes we want God to have. This surely doesn’t represent the one true God. Another common problem is the tendency to think of God as a cosmic Santa Claus—the bearded grandpa upstairs who gives us things when we ask nicely. Such small thoughts of God are simply absurd. The God of Scripture is no fairy in the sky. He is eternal, sitting outside of time, infinitely holy and wise. He is the ground of all existence. God doesn’t simply exist, he brings into existence.

The foundation of most religions is the question of God. Three major religions in the world are monotheistic (believe in only one God). These are Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Christianity, however, introduces a unique element into the conception of God. That element is the Trinity. There is one God in three persons. This is ground zero of Christian belief. The Trinity is not some sort of Chinese finger-trap for our mind. It concerns the very nature of the God we worship. The splendor and majesty of the Triune God prompts us to worship.

In LBC 2, we read some of the most extraordinarily beautiful summaries of who God is. Paragraphs 1 and 2 deserve careful rereading and meditation. As you read, ponder the magnitude and the worth of the God we sing to every Lord’s Day. Be humbled before His majesty and our utter depravity before Him. May the cry of *solī Deo gloria* (Glory to God alone) resound from the depths of our hearts as we ponder our Great God.

## **Key Passage: Exodus 34:6–7**

1. In what ways do we sell God short or make less of Him?
2. Reread 2.1 closely. In what ways does this description differ from popular concepts of God? Why is God worthy of worship?
3. Make a list of God's attributes with Scripture references. How does each one inform your day-to-day life?
4. How does it make you feel to learn that God needs no creature (2.2)? How does this flip the script on way we typically think?
5. Why is the Trinity important (2.3)? What does the doctrine say about Jesus? The Holy Spirit?
6. Read Ephesians 1:3–14. Why is the Trinity essential to a full account of salvation?
7. How does a biblical picture of God inform our worship? What practical differences does this make in a congregational worship service?
8. How does article 2 challenge your view of God?

**Q. Who is the first and best being?**

**A. God is the first and best being (Baptist Catechism Q. 1).**

## Chapter 3: God's Decree

Article 3 will be the first real challenge for those who have grown up in the modern church. Popular Christianity in America thinks little of God's sovereignty and thinks much of human freedom. The will of God is seen as secondary to the will of humans. Well-meaning preachers say foolish things, "Like God *can't act* if you don't make the move." Such thinking flatly contradicts the teaching of Scripture. In Scripture, we meet a God who is a freight train. No thing and no one will stand in his way or alter his intentions (Dan 4:35).

The decree of God refers to His complete freedom and intention to bring all things about exactly as He intends. We usually refer to this as God's sovereignty. A good way to think of sovereignty is "kingly freedom." There is only one king of the universe and He can exercise His freedom as He pleases.

The LBC introduces us to the difficult doctrine of predestination or election in 3.3. Most people recoil upon first being introduced to the doctrine. Wrestle with the passages of Scripture to determine its validity. Remember, we don't get to decide how things work. Scripture is the final authority. Additionally, try to see the doctrine of election as a summons to praise (3.7). If God has been gracious to you by opening your eyes to see the glories of Christ, then this is no time for sulking. This is a time to stand amazed at the gracious good pleasure of the King. Finally, see the hope that it provides for a sinful world.

**Key Passage: Romans 9:10–24**

1. Why is the concept of free will so prevalent in our culture? Why do we value it and think it is important? Why is it prevalent in the American church?
2. According to 3.1, God acts “without reference to anything outside Himself.” What does this say about God? His power? His kingly freedom? Human ability?
3. Does anything happen apart from jurisdiction and sovereignty of God? How is this comforting?
4. What is the purpose of predestination (3.3)?
5. Does God actively damn the non-elect (3.1, 3)?
6. When did God choose His people? On what basis did He choose (3.5)?
7. This is a difficult doctrine, according to 3.7, how should we respond? What does this response look like practically?
8. Read Ephesians 1:3–14. How is God’s kingly freedom on display throughout the passage?
9. How does the doctrine of election make grace astounding?
10. What causes a person to believe the gospel? How does this affect evangelism?

**Q. What are the decrees of God?**

**A. The decrees of God are His eternal purpose according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He has foreordained whatever comes to pass (Baptist Catechism Q. 10).**



## Chapter 4: Creation, Divine Providence

The Christian worldview is one of two-ism. There is God and there is creation. God is not part of creation. Consequently, Christians hold a supernatural worldview, where things outside the natural world can occur. The miracle of creation insists that this is exactly how the world began. In article 4, the LBC makes a statement on God's initiative to create the world and humankind. God creates humans, male and female, body and soul, in the image of God. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were capable of keeping the law of God. When they fail, humans lose this capability—a reality to be discussed in the chapter on the Fall of mankind. Being created in the image of God means human dignity derives from God not simply from within. This is a key difference between a Christian worldview and a humanist or secular worldview.

Article 5 further develops the idea of God's kingly freedom as He works within His creation. His providence guides all things in accordance with His will. Such teaching should be immensely comforting in a world that so often feels unstable. Yet, God has not lost control. As R. C. Sproul famously said, "If there is one single molecule in this universe running around loose, totally free of God's sovereignty, then we have no guarantee that a single promise of God will ever be fulfilled." Because God is sovereign, we can be sure that all things will happen according to His will (see Rom 8:28).

**Key Passage: Job 42:1-2**

1. What is God's relation to the world? Is He part of it? Can you think of any examples where people may conceive of God as part of or within creation?

2. If God is not part of creation, how does this affect His ability to deal with creation?

3. Why did God create the world? What is the purpose of all things? How does this change your perspective?

4. LBC 5.1 gives four verbs of action describing God's providence: "upholds, directs, arranges, and governs." What do each of these imply?

5. Did sin catch God off guard? Did it thwart His intentions (5.4)? How does sin demonstrate God's glory (also see 6.1)?

6. Why does God allow His people to sin (5.5)? What should our response be to temptation and sin?

7. How do articles 4 and 5 prompt us to worship God? How can we adore and praise Him considering these statements?

8. What is comforting about God's providence (see 5.7)?

9. Read the hymn "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." In what ways does this hymn speak to the truths of these articles?

**Q. What are God's works of providence?**

**A. God's works of providence are His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing of all His creatures, and all their actions (Baptist Catechism Q. 14).**

## Chapter 5: *The Fall of Mankind*

Sin is not a popular topic in the present culture. Ideals of tolerance abound. Everyone is free to make whatever choice they like, and no one can judge. Yet, such thinking cannot exist within a theistic worldview. If there is a God, then we are morally accountable to that God. This is precisely what the Christian view says.

Sin is best defined as active rebellion against God (6.1). The theologian Louis Berkhof writes that sin is “an evil course which man has deliberately chosen to follow and which carries untold misery. Fundamentally, it is not something passive, such as a weakness, a fault, or an imperfection, for which we cannot be held responsible, but an active opposition to God, and a positive transgression of His law, which constitutes guilt.”

When Adam failed in the garden, we inherited his rebellion (6.2–3). God had made the original covenant with Adam. As such, Adam represented all of us as our federal (covenant) head. Sin, then, is not merely the personal mistakes we make. In fact, such a view of sin is known as Pelagianism. Pelagius was condemned by more Church councils than any other person in all of Church history. Amazingly, Pelagianism is alive and well in the Church in America. Article 5 of the LBC offers us a much-needed correction. Only when we see the cataclysmic effects of sin will we see the glorious grace of the gospel. Unless we are made alive (regenerated), we are dead in sin.

**Key Passage: Romans 5:12–21**

1. How do we typically define sin?
2. According to 6.1, why did God allow sin in the garden? Why didn't he stop it?
3. According to 6.2, what does it mean to be dead in sin?
4. When did we become guilty of sin (6.2)?
5. What is our situation before God? What is our only hope (6.3)?
6. According to 6.4, what is the extent of original sin? How does it affect us today?
7. Define regeneration. Can a Christian be sinless (6.5)?
8. How does this article define sin differently from popular portrayals? Do you think we make light of sin?
9. How does this article affect your view of sin?
10. What do you think of this statement: "People are basically good"?

**Q. What is the sinfulness of that condition into which all mankind has fallen?**

**A. The sinfulness of the condition into which all mankind fell is the guilt of Adam's first sin, the lack of original righteousness, and the corruption of our whole nature (which is commonly called original sin), together with all actual transgressions which come from this nature (Baptist Catechism Q. 21).**

## Chapter 6: God's Covenant, Christ the Mediator

The concept of covenant is foreign to modern Americans, but covenants can't be overestimated for understanding how God works in the world. The entire story of Scripture is framed around covenants. A covenant is established when two parties enter into a sworn agreement, binding them together. Reformed Christians and the LBC recognize three major covenants. The covenant of redemption is made in eternity past between the Father and the Son (7.2; 8.1). The covenant of works was made with Adam at creation (7.1). The covenant of grace is ratified by the work of Christ, but it is promised first in Gen 3:15, then anticipated throughout the Old Testament (7.3).

Similarly, the idea of a mediator is foreign to us, especially when it comes to God. Most of us have been taught a shallow spirituality that acts as though God were merely waiting for us. But Scripture teaches that we can't simply enter God's presence. We can't expect a hearing because we say a prayer. We need a mediator. Because Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human (8.2), He alone functions as the mediator between God and humans (8.9). As our mediator, He fulfills a threefold office. He is our prophet, priest, and king (8.1, 10). He suffered under the weight of our sin (8.4) fully satisfying the justice of God and reconciling us to God (8.5). While the covenant of grace is not established in history until Jesus's redemptive work is accomplished, the promise of a mediator was the means of salvation for those in the Old Testament as well (8.6). Thus, in the spirit of the Reformation, we affirm that salvation is by grace *alone* through faith *alone* in Christ *alone*.

**Key Passage: Galatians 3:1-14**

1. What is significant about Jesus's three offices? How does He minister to us (8.1, 10)?
  2. Is Christ a lesser god than the Father? What language is used to ensure that Jesus's identity is clear (8.2)?
  3. What does Jesus do as the mediator between God and man (8.4)?
  4. What does Jesus accomplish (8.5)?
  5. How were Old Testament saints saved (8.6)?
  6. What benefits do we have with Christ as our mediator?
  7. Thinking about the covenant of redemption (7.2; 8.1), what does this say about God's plan for salvation? How does it motivate our worship?
  8. How do Jesus's roles as prophet, priest, and king encourage us to worship Him?
  9. How does Jesus's ministry as our mediator comfort us when we feel the guilt of sin?
  10. How does the concept of covenant change your view of God's relationship to you?
- Q. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the condition of sin and misery?**
- A: God, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, having chosen a people to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the condition of sin and misery, and to bring them into a condition of salvation, by a Redeemer (Baptist Catechism Q. 23).**

## Chapter 7: Free Will, Effectual Calling

In the revivals of the 1800s, a strong emphasis was placed on the free will of humans. Salvation was preached as though it were completely contingent upon human decision. This emphasis on human ability was surely a product of the times as enlightened people felt increasingly in control of their fate. Such an attitude can be seen in the famous last lines of the 1875 poem “Invictus”: “I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul.”

While the LBC acknowledges free will, it hardly positions man as the master of his own fate. A faithful reading of Scripture will not allow us to centralize the human will. A desperately needed corrective in our day is to recognize the centrality of God’s will, especially in salvation.

Article 9 introduces us to the concept of free will. Paragraph 1 states that humans have free will. Paragraph 2 states that prior to the Fall of mankind, humans were capable of pleasing God. But, as a result of the Fall, according to paragraph 3, the human will is incapable of responding positively to the Lord. In other words, we can’t and won’t decide for God unless He acts first. We need more than a persuasive sermon to make us alive. We need an act of God.

This act of God is explained in article 10 under the heading “effectual calling.” The effectual calling refers to the effective (successful) call of God on a person’s life. Like Lazarus in the tomb, we remain dead until God decides to call us forth. And when God makes such a decision, His calling will be successful. We will come out of the tomb. The theological term for this is regeneration. God unilaterally acts to raise people from the dead. He does this not because of anything we’ve done but according to His own gracious initiative.

## **Key Passage: Ephesians 2:1–10**

1. Does our free will have limits? What are some things we cannot do? What does 9.3 tell us we cannot do?
2. Who acts first in salvation according to 9.4?
3. How does God save a person? What can hinder His ability to save (10.1)?
4. What is our part in salvation (10.2)?
5. Do all religions lead to God (10.4)? What statements are made about the exclusivity of God?
6. Is it possible for a person to truly love the Lord without regeneration?
7. How do these two articles differ from modern presentations of the gospel that make a person's decision the main factor?
8. How does this change your view of salvation? If this is how salvation works, how does it prompt you to praise and worship God?
9. How is this a comfort in evangelism?

### **Q. What is effectual calling?**

**A. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, to convince us of our sin and misery, to enlighten our minds in the knowledge of Christ, to renew our wills, and thus persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel (Baptist Catechism Q. 34).**



## Chapter 8: Justification, Adoption, Sanctification

Articles 11–13 introduce key theological terms. The term justification means to make righteous or declare innocent. Adoption refers to God’s choice in taking His elect to be His children. Sanctification means to make holy. Each of these terms are crucial to understanding the Christian life.

Justification can be thought of in a legal sense. LBC 11.1 refers to “pardoning their sins and accounting and accepting them as righteous.” In other words, God the judge declares us innocent and righteous. The basis of this declaration is for Christ’s sake alone. Our bankrupt account is credited with His righteousness. How do we gain this justification? By faith—that is, resting on Christ alone (11.2). Christ’s work is comprehensive, completing justification for the elect once and for all (11.3). Against the Roman Catholic theory of justification, we do not earn justification by penance (11.5).

Adoption is the sweet doctrine that reminds us that we have been accepted into God’s family, seated at His table. This is astonishing. To paraphrase J. I. Packer, “Ask a person what he thinks of being God’s child and you will learn what he knows of Christianity.”

Sanctification is the ongoing process by which God’s children increase in holiness. The goal is that we would be like Christ. Sanctification is not perfect in this life and it is always a complicated process, but the work of the Spirit is evident in the life of believers. A believer’s desires are altered so that they long to obey the Lord.

### Key Passage: Romans 8:29–30

1. Define justification.
2. Define sanctification.

3. What part does our obedience play in justification (11.1)? Why is this amazing? Comforting?
  4. Where does faith come from (11.1)? Should we be prideful of our faith?
  5. What is the extent of our justification? Do we have to pay for certain sins (11.3)?
  6. What should we do when we sin (11.5)?
  7. What does it mean to be adopted by God?
  8. Where does holiness come from (13.1)?
  9. Do Christians grow in holiness? Do they sin (13.3)?
  10. When someone says, “I know they are in heaven because they were a good person,” what is wrong with that statement?
  11. What comfort can we take from God’s plan of justification, adoption, and sanctification? How does this lead us to praise?
- Q. What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?**
- A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God’s love, peace of conscience, fellowship with Christ, joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace, the privilege of prayer, and perseverance therein to the end (Baptist Catechism Q. 39).**

## Chapter 9: Saving Faith, Repentance, Good Works

The cultural Christianity of the United States left us with two seemingly disparate problems. On the one hand, a shallow version of faith was preached. For over a century, people have been taught to say a prayer as a formula to ensure salvation. If they said the prayer, so the thinking goes, they are “saved.” This is really nothing more than superstition. It is not faith as we see in Scripture.

On the other hand, large segments of the church in America have given way to moralism—that is, the idea that Christianity is simply about following an ethical code. Essentially, good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell. Again, this has nothing to do with biblical faith.

The LBC provides three articles that clarify biblical faith. In article 14, we are introduced to the ordinary means of grace—namely, preaching of the Word, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and prayer. These are the means by which God typically works in the world. We are also introduced to the character of saving faith. Saving faith manifests in obedience to Scripture and relying on the gracious work of Christ.

Article 15 explains repentance. The LBC understands repentance to be a gift from God. Thus, those who have not been first regenerated by the Holy Spirit are unable to repent truly. Repentance is an ongoing provision in the life of the believer, who is still plagued by the sin nature.

Finally, article 16 explains the proper role of good works in the Christian life. They are not salvific, but they are evidence of saving faith. These works, like salvation itself, arise out of God’s work in the believer’s heart.

**Key Passage:** Titus 3:3–7

1. Why is saving faith called a grace? What does it enable someone to do (14.1)?
2. What is the typical means of producing saving faith? What else strengthens faith (14.1)?
3. What are the objects of our faith (14.2)?
4. Who creates repentance in us (15.3)?
5. Why must repentance continue (15.4)?
6. What do good works accomplish (16.2)?
7. According to 16.3, who prompts good works in us?
8. Why are good works insufficient for salvation (16.5)?
9. Do unbelievers who do good works please God (16.7)?
10. What are some ways faith is popularly used?
11. How can saving faith be identified?
12. Do good people go to heaven?

**Q. What is faith in Jesus Christ?**

**A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the gospel (Baptist Catechism Q. 90).**

## Chapter 10: Perseverance, Assurance

Can a person lose salvation? Various answers have been proposed in the history of theology. Common language in Southern Baptist circles has been “once saved always saved.” This language is dangerous and misleading because it solidifies the idea that all someone really needs to do is say a prayer and perhaps be baptized. By contrast, the doctrine of perseverance envisions God actively working to conform His people into the image of Christ. Those who belong to Him will be made holy (sanctified). Perseverance is a precious doctrine that reminds us of God’s active role in the life of His people. He does not leave us alone to figure it out or get it together before it’s too late. Instead, He corrects, disciplines, and providentially guides our life to ensure continued faithfulness. Perseverance is ultimately rooted in the character of God who remains eternally faithful (17.2).

Sometimes with the doctrine of election comes doubt. The question is raised: How can I ever know if I’m part of the elect? The LBC answers this question with an article on assurance. The basis of assurance is not on some vague notion of hope. Rather, it is fixed on the work of Christ on behalf of the believer. Assurance can increase or decrease throughout life, but a maturing believer can find stability and confidence in being in a state of grace. Such assurance comes via ordinary means (Scripture, Lord’s Supper, prayer), not a supernatural experience (18.3). These ordinary means are particularly important in times of doubt (18.4).

**Key Passage: Hebrews 10:11–14**

1. Can a true believer lose their faith (17.1)? Why not?
2. What is the basis for a believer's security (17.2)? How is this comforting?
3. What happens when a believer falls into habitual sin (17.3)?
4. How can someone be assured of salvation (18.2)?
5. What must all believers endeavor to do (18.3)? Why?
6. Is the assurance of salvation based on a decision, a response to an altar call, a prayer, or baptism?
7. How does God's preserving activity give us confidence in this life?
8. How would you respond to someone who says they used to be a Christian?
9. What are the dangerous signs that accompany habitual sin? How should habitual sin be addressed?
10. Do true believers have doubts? How should doubts be addressed?

**Q. What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?**

**A. The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are His ordinances, especially the Word, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and prayer; all these means are made effectual to the elect for salvation (Baptist Catechism Q. 93).**

## Chapter 11: Law, Gospel

The proper use of the Old Testament is often perplexing to believers. After all, we are not under the jurisdiction of the law (Gal 3:24–26). Does this mean the law is pointless or irrelevant? Not at all. The law still serves important functions and the Old Testament should be read with much profit. Reformed approaches to the Old Testament law distinguish between three types of law: moral, ceremonial, and civil. Only the moral law is continually binding. The ceremonial and civil law were only binding on the nation of Israel. Nevertheless, important principles can still be learned from the ceremonial and civil law. From the ceremonial law, we learn about the character of God and the proper worship of Him. Most of all, we see the beauty of the work of Christ by way of analogy (19.3). In the civil law, we see God’s just character on display. From this, we learn justice (19.4). The moral law, laid out in the Ten Commandments (19.2), does not justify or condemn a believer (19.6). Instead, it directs by way of principles and it exposes desires that are contrary to God’s character. The law, then, points to Christ. The right use of the law is harmony with the gospel as it propels us to delightfully obey the revealed will of God (19.7).

Because the moral law was broken, thereby violating the covenant of works, God has instituted a covenant of grace through the gospel (20.1). The gospel of Christ, revealed in the Word of God, is the only way for a person to be reconciled to the holy and living God. Thus, the gospel must be preached to all people at all times.

**Key Passage: Galatians 3:23–29**

1. What is your conception of the Old Testament? What role does it play?
2. Are the Ten Commandments in force today? How so? Do those who keep them merit eternal life?
3. What three types of law are described?
4. According to 19.6, what is the function of the moral law for believers? What is it unable to do? What is it able to do?
5. How do law and gospel go together (19.7)?
6. Describe how someone can be freed from the penalty of the law (20.1–4).
7. What are some practical questions to ask when reading the Old Testament law? How can you benefit from reading the law?
8. How do these two articles explain *sola gratia* (grace alone) and *sola fide* (faith alone)?
9. How do these two articles encourage us to praise God's character? What makes the gospel so marvelous?
10. Look at Leviticus 19:26–28. Are these laws binding for Christians? Why or why not?

**Q. What is the sum of the Ten Commandments?**

**A. The sum of the Ten Commandments is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves (Baptist Catechism Q. 47).**



## Chapter 12: Christian Liberty, Religious Worship

Christian liberty is an incredibly freeing doctrine for believers. We are under no burden of law. We need not pacify a holy God with perfect rule-keeping. Christian liberty, however, is abused. There are two errors, deriving from extremes, that we find in the pages of the New Testament. First is the error of antinomianism. Antinomianism literally means “against the law.” The error is to think Christians are free even with regard to sin. This is simply not true (21.3). The second error is the error of legalism. Legalism lives and dies by rule-keeping. Legalism sets up manmade laws as though they were God’s law. For example, Baptists have been guilty of identifying such things as dancing, drinking (in moderation), and smoking as sinful. But God has not declared such. We are awfully audacious to play the role of the divine lawgiver. Moreover, legalism bases a person’s justification before God on their ability to keep the law. This flies in the face of the gospel, rejecting justification by grace through faith in Christ alone. Freedom in Christ means we are not bound to antinomianism or legalism. We can freely and delightfully obey those commands which God has given us while resting on the grace of the cross.

One tricky area of the law, especially in our modern day, is what to do with the Lord’s Day. The reformers preferred the title “Lord’s Day” to “Sunday” because Sunday has pagan roots. On the Lord’s Day worship is the chief objective. What constitutes proper worship is defined by God Himself (22.1, 5). The LBC sets forth a case of “sabbath” observance on the Lord’s Day (22.7). The Lord’s Day is to be devoted to the Lord.

**Key Passage: Galatians 5:1–14**

1. Can you think of examples of antinomianism or legalism?
  2. What does Christian freedom/liberty mean? What are the results and benefits (21.1)? Which of these stands out to you?
  3. Is it OK for a Christian to consider something sinful that God does not call a sin (21.2)? Can you think of examples?
  4. Is Christian liberty a license to sin? What is the purpose of freedom (21.3)?
  5. What is the rule for worship of God (22.1)? What should be part of worship (22.5)? What are some examples of things that shouldn't be part of worship?
  6. What is the purpose of Sabbath (22.7)? How should we practice Sabbath (22.8)?
  7. What criteria should songs in church meet?
  8. Is it appropriate to take time during the worship service for secular celebration or other things not related to worship? Can you think of examples?
  9. What should a Sunday look like for a Christian?
- Q. What is required in the fourth commandment?**  
**A. The fourth commandment requires the keeping holy to God one whole day in seven to be a Sabbath to Himself (Baptist Catechism Q. 63).**

## Chapter 13: Oaths, Government, Marriage

Since we live in the world, we must consider how to conduct our worldly affairs as Christians. Articles 23–25 consider the topics of oaths/vows, government, and marriage. In order to be faithful in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation (Phil 2:15), we must give due attention to our conduct in the public sector.

Our culture uses words cheaply. Oaths and vows are breakable and are uttered with the slightest consideration. The LBC challenges us to consider the seriousness of oaths and to assess our practice of making oaths. In short, oaths are made to God alone and with the utmost gravity.

Civil government functions as a servant of God. It is not to be worshiped or hoped in, but it is to be respected and viewed as a common grace from God. Every civil government serves a twofold purpose: (1) God’s glory and (2) the common good. Christians ought to submit to their government insofar as they require that which is lawful (24.3). Unlawful requirements, such as those that violate the clear commands of the Lord, do not require submission.

Marriage is an institution that is simultaneously religious and civil. It requires vows before God. According to the reformers, marriage serves three purposes: (1) mutual help, (2) childbearing, (3) and holiness (25.2). This offers a vision of marriage that differs from a culture founded on personal fulfillment. The reformers rightly understood that all of life is to be lived for the glory of God alone (*solī Deo gloria*). In other words, sacred living was not limited to priests, monks, and nuns. All Christians are called to live in a manner worthy of the gospel (Phil 1:27).

**Key Passage: Romans 13:1–7**

1. In your mind, what is the relationship of Christianity to the secular world? Should we be isolated? Separate? Part of? Working for? Transforming?

2. How should oaths and vows be approached?

3. What is the purpose of civil authorities (24.1)?

4. Can a Christian work in government? How should they perform their duty (24.2)?

5. How should we respond to civil authorities (24.3)? Do you see errors in today's church in this regard?

6. What are the three reasons for marriage (25.2)? How are these helpful?

7. Who should Christians marry (25.3)? Should a church perform a wedding between an unbeliever and a believer?

8. What are the extreme positions of Christian's relationship to government? How does LBC 24 provide an alternative?

9. Why is it important for Christians to consider their relationship to the public sector?

10. How does marriage bear witness to the gospel?

**Q. What is required in the fifth commandment?**

**A. The fifth commandment requires the preserving the honor and performing the duties belonging to everyone in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals (Baptist Catechism Q. 69).**

## Chapter 14: Church, Communion of Saints

Christianity in America trends toward individualism. Some are under the impression that it is possible to be a Christian without anyone. They can listen to worship music on the radio, sermons on the internet, and read Christian books. But the idea that one can be a Christian apart from the Church, the body of saints, would be preposterous to the reformers (see LBC 27). Even Calvin echoes the early church father Cyprian when he said that those who have God as Father should also have the Church as mother.

Baptists are unique when it comes to their view of local churches. They hardly minimize the importance of gathering in local congregations (26.12). They do, however, see each congregation as independent, governing itself (26.15). Each local congregation consists of members—all of whom are professing believers. Each congregation recognizes two offices: (1) pastors/elders and (2) deacons (26.8).

Two theological distinctions are necessary when discussing the church. First, there is the catholic or universal Church. This refers to all true saints in all times and in all places. In other words, the elect who are in Christ make up the catholic Church. Sometimes, this is referred to as the invisible church. Second, there is the local church, which consists of professing believers in a specific congregation. Sometimes, this is referred to as the visible church.

Joining a local congregation is obligatory on all believers. The congregation benefits from their gifts and the individual believer benefits from the accountability of the congregation. Christian maturity is impossible without the local congregation.

**Key Passage: 1 Corinthians 12:14–27**

1. What are your perceptions of church? Why is it important?
2. Define the catholic or universal church? Why is this significant?
3. Who should the members of a local congregation be?
4. Why does Christ command us to join a local church (26.5)?
5. What are the two offices in a church (26.8)?
6. What do elders/pastors do? How should the congregation respond to pastors (26.10)? Does each church have only one pastor (26.8–9)?
7. How should interpersonal conflict be handled in the church (26.13)?
8. What are some practical ways church members should treat each other (27.1–2)?
9. In light of these two articles, what are your thoughts on the following statement: “you don’t have to go to church to be a Christian”?
10. How does Jesus feel about His church? How should we feel about church?

**Q. What is the duty of such who are rightly baptized?**  
**A. It is the duty of such who are rightly baptized to give themselves to some particular and orderly church of Jesus Christ, that they may walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless (Baptist Catechism Q. 101).**

## Chapter 15: Baptism and Lord's Supper

The church has two sacraments or ordinances. Sacraments highlights the gracious nature of these practices. Ordinances highlights the fact that they are commanded by the Lord (28.1).

Baptists get their name from their distinctive view of baptism. Most Christians in history, including many of the reformers, have practiced infant baptism. Many have, unfortunately, equated infant baptism with salvation. Baptists rejected infant baptism (paedobaptism) on the basis of the New Testament. According to Baptist understanding, the New Testament teaches the following order: believe and be baptized (29.2). This position is called credo-baptism. Credo means "believe." It can also be called believer's baptism. Baptism is a sign of union with Christ in His death and resurrection (29.1). Baptism should be done in the name of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Spirit (29.3). The proper mode is immersion as it best symbolizes death, burial, and resurrection (29.4). Baptism marks the means of entry into a local church.

The article on the Lord's Supper is historically conditions. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the bread and the wine become the body and blood of Christ and salvation is only possible for those who eat such. The reformers rejected this view and the LBC follows suit in article 30. But this does not mean that the Lord's Supper is insignificant. By no means, it is an ordinary means of faith, strengthening and nourishing the believer (30.1). At the table, we are spiritually fed (30.7). For this reason, the Lord's Supper should be a regular part of the worship service, recognizing that it was instituted by the Lord and given for our benefit (1 Cor 11:26).

**Key Passage: Romans 6:1-4**

1. What are your initial thoughts about baptism and the Lord's Supper?

2. What is baptism a sign of (29.1)? Does it provide salvation?

3. Who should be baptized (29.2)? Is infant baptism a valid baptism?

4. What are the benefits of the Lord's Supper (30.1)?

5. How does LBC 30.2–6 differ from the Roman Catholic practice of Mass?

6. What is the significance in the Lord's Supper (30.7)? Does anything happen or is purely a symbol?

7. Why are baptism and the Lord's Supper important for the church?

8. In what ways have modern Baptists failed to see the significance in these two ordinances?

9. How do the ordinances lead to praise and worship?

10. Should we partake in the Lord's Supper regularly? Why or why? What should our attitude be when we come to the table?

**Q. How do baptism and the Lord's Supper become effectual means of salvation?**

**A. Baptism and the Lord's Supper become effectual means of salvation, not for any virtue in them, or in him that administers them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of the Spirit in those that by faith receive them (Baptist Catechism Q. 96).**



## Chapter 16: Death, Last Judgment

The topics of heaven and hell probably produce more confusion for modern Christians than any other single topic. At funerals, pastors routinely misrepresent the biblical truth when they focus on a heavenly existence and fail to mention the bodily resurrection. Songs like “When We All Get to Heaven” have far more in common with Greek paganism influenced by Plato than the Christian conception of the last things. The gloriously good news of the gospel is that Jesus has defeated death in His resurrection. Those who follow Him will be raised when He returns. The end of the matter, then, is not a disembodied existence in heaven. This is more properly called the intermediate state. Christ’s work will be finished when He returns and the dead in Christ are raised to everlasting life (1 Cor 15:26; 1 Thess 4:16).

The Bible lays out the following order of events. When a person dies, their soul continues to live. The body is laid in the ground. If the person is a believer, their soul is in the presence of the Lord (Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:8). But some mystery surrounds this intermediate state. And anticipation and longing for resurrection continues (Rev 6:10). When Christ returns, their bodies will be raised (1 Cor 15:51–52). This will coincide with the final judgment.

The idea of judgment should keep us vigilant (32.3). The Bible often exhorts us to be watchful. While judgment is a sobering thought, it should not be viewed as dreadful for Christians. While our own works would turn up woefully short, the work of Christ provides complete security. For Christians, then, we long for the return of Christ, when injustices will be set right. We cry out with the words that close both the New Testament and the LBC: “Come Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.”

## **Key Passage: 1 Corinthians 15:42–57**

1. What is the typical presentation of heaven? What is the typical presentation at a funeral?
2. What happens when someone dies (31.1)? Is this their final state?
3. Do people who die have bodies in heaven (31.1–2)?
4. What is the purpose of judgment (32.2)?
5. How does future judgment benefit us now (32.3)?
6. How do our works point to the gospel? See Eph 2:10.
7. Should Christians fear the judgment? How does understanding the gospel reduce the fear of judgment? Why is it that so many people fear judgment?
8. Is a funeral truly Christian if it never mentions the resurrection?
9. In what ways do many Christians misunderstand heaven? Can you give some examples? How is the biblical account better?

**Q. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?**

**A. At the resurrection believers, being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged, and acquitted in the Day of Judgment, and made perfectly blessed, both in soul and body, in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity (Baptist Catechism Q. 41).**

## Appendix 1: Recommended Next Steps

Congratulations! You've worked through a rich piece of historic theology. You've undoubtedly been challenged by new ideas and difficult concepts. Hopefully, your soul has been nourished and your praise for the Most Holy Trinity has deepened. The Christian life is one of constant growth. Perhaps you've now acquired a taste for substantive teaching. Unfortunately, much of what passes for Christian literature is immensely shallow by comparison. What should you do next? Here are some recommendations.

1. Begin digging deeply into Scripture. Start with the book of Romans. Get a good study Bible such as the *ESV Study Bible* or *The Reformation Study Bible* and begin reading, studying, and taking notes. Once you've studied Romans, move on to John or Ephesians and do the same. Good commentaries by John Calvin, Martin Luther, and Matthew Henry are freely available online.

2. Read good books. J. I. Packer's *Knowing God* is a classic. Michael Horton's *Core Christianity* will help clarify much of what you've learned. R. C. Sproul's *What Is Reformed Theology?* (also available on YouTube) will help you think deeper about the worldview presented in the LBC.

3. Listen to sound teaching. The internet has opened up tremendous access to sound teaching. Podcasts like The White Horse Inn, Doctrine and Devotion, Help Me Teach the Bible, and Alpha and Omega Ministries will continue to expose you to sound teaching.

4. Continue reading and studying creeds and confessions. The creeds in appendix 2 have served as the basis for Christian orthodoxy for over 1500 years. Read them. Study them. Understand them. The Baptist Catechism is readily available online (look for the free updated version with explanations by John Piper). The Abstract of Principles (also free online) is a summary of the LBC. It was used as the founding document for the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1858. Today, both the Southern Baptist Theology Seminary and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary require faculty to sign this document.

5. Continue studying with a group. Meet regularly with other believers to encourage and sharpen each other.

6. Pray and worship in light of the truths learned in the confession. Theology ought to always lead to doxology. The proper application of theology is praising the triune God for His character and His works.

## Appendix 2: Creeds

Several creeds have historically defined orthodoxy (right belief) for Christians. These are the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. These creeds concern essential doctrines of the Christian faith, which all Christians can agree on regardless of denomination. During the Protestant Reformation, the reformers recognized these creeds as foundational. The doctrines laid out in these creeds primarily concern the trinitarian nature of God and the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Such things are fundamental to Christian faith. Additionally, the Chalcedonian definition, which is not formally a creed, but more of a boundary marker, is recognized as an early statement of orthodoxy on the incarnation.

### Apostles' Creed

1. I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;
2. And in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord;
3. Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary;
4. Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell;
5. The third day He rose again from the dead;
6. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
7. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead;
8. I believe in the Holy Spirit.
9. I believe in the holy catholic church; the communion of saints;
10. The forgiveness of sins;

11. The resurrection of the body;
12. And the life everlasting. Amen.

## Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
begotten from the Father before all ages,  
God from God,  
Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made;  
of the same essence as the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven;  
he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the  
virgin Mary,  
and was made human.  
He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered and was buried.  
The third day he rose again, according to the  
Scriptures.  
He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again with glory  
to judge the living and the dead.  
His kingdom will never end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life.  
He proceeds from the Father and the Son,

and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.

He spoke through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come. Amen.

### **Athanasian Creed**

Whoever desires to be saved should above all hold to the catholic faith.

Anyone who does not keep it whole and unbroken will doubtless perish eternally.

Now this is the catholic faith:

That we worship one God in trinity and the trinity in unity,

neither blending their persons

nor dividing their essence.

For the person of the Father is a distinct person,

the person of the Son is another,

and that of the Holy Spirit still another.

But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one,

their glory equal, their majesty coeternal.

What quality the Father has, the Son has, and the Holy Spirit has.

The Father is uncreated,

the Son is uncreated,

the Holy Spirit is uncreated.

The Father is immeasurable,

the Son is immeasurable,

the Holy Spirit is immeasurable.

The Father is eternal,  
the Son is eternal,  
the Holy Spirit is eternal.

And yet there are not three eternal beings;  
there is but one eternal being.

So too there are not three uncreated or  
immeasurable beings;  
there is but one uncreated and immeasurable  
being.

Similarly, the Father is almighty,  
the Son is almighty,  
the Holy Spirit is almighty.

Yet there are not three almighty beings;  
there is but one almighty being.

Thus the Father is God,  
the Son is God,  
the Holy Spirit is God.

Yet there are not three gods;  
there is but one God.

Thus the Father is Lord,  
the Son is Lord,  
the Holy Spirit is Lord.

Yet there are not three lords;  
there is but one Lord.

Just as Christian truth compels us  
to confess each person individually  
as both God and Lord,  
so catholic religion forbids us  
to say that there are three gods or lords.

The Father was neither made nor created nor begotten  
from anyone.

The Son was neither made nor created;  
he was begotten from the Father alone.

The Holy Spirit was neither made nor created nor  
begotten;  
he proceeds from the Father and the Son.



Accordingly there is one Father, not three fathers;  
there is one Son, not three sons;  
there is one Holy Spirit, not three holy spirits.  
Nothing in this trinity is before or after,  
nothing is greater or smaller;  
in their entirety the three persons  
are coeternal and coequal with each other.  
So in everything, as was said earlier,  
we must worship their trinity in their unity  
and their unity in their trinity.

Anyone then who desires to be saved  
should think thus about the trinity.  
But it is necessary for eternal salvation  
that one also believe in the incarnation  
of our Lord Jesus Christ faithfully.  
Now this is the true faith:

That we believe and confess  
that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son,  
is both God and human, equally.  
He is God from the essence of the Father,  
begotten before time;  
and he is human from the essence of his mother,  
born in time;  
completely God, completely human,  
with a rational soul and human flesh;  
equal to the Father as regards divinity,  
less than the Father as regards humanity.  
Although he is God and human,  
yet Christ is not two, but one.  
He is one, however,  
not by his divinity being turned into flesh,  
but by God's taking humanity to himself.  
He is one,  
certainly not by the blending of his essence,  
but by the unity of his person.

For just as one human is both rational soul and flesh,  
so too the one Christ is both God and human.  
He suffered for our salvation;  
he descended to hell;  
he arose from the dead;  
he ascended to heaven;  
he is seated at the Father's right hand;  
from there he will come to judge the living and the  
dead.

At his coming all people will arise bodily  
and give an accounting of their own deeds.  
Those who have done good will enter eternal life,  
and those who have done evil will enter eternal fire.  
This is the catholic faith:  
one cannot be saved without believing it firmly and  
faithfully.

### **Chalcedonian Definition**

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but

one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.



