

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 1 – “Of the Holy Scriptures”, Message # 20 –
“He Opened their Understanding”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class,
by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 10th, 2019.**

Chapter 1, Paragraph 5 – We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church of God to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, and the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man’s salvation, and many other incomparable excellencies, and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding, our h) full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

h) John 16: 13-14 1st Corinthians 2: 10-12 1st John 2: 20,27

Let me now give to you the proposition of truth which goes along with our Confession in this last part of Paragraph 5 –

1st – Our minds must be opened to comprehend the Scriptures by God Himself.

In other words – We cannot believe the Scripture to be the word of God, we cannot believe any particular divine truth which we find in the Scripture, without the effectual inward work of the Holy Spirit’s illuminating our minds the fact that this is His word and His word is true. It is only when the Holy Spirit illumines our minds, that we can receive the testimony of the Scriptural facts with the full confidence that they are God's very word, because His authority is in them. It is because of the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts, that we are thereby convinced to believe them and to receive them and to rest our faith upon them. By the working of the Spirit in granting illumination on them, opening our minds to them, we become convinced that it is our duty to believe them. And we joyfully receive them as from the hand of God Himself.

We have a good example of this in Jesus’ opening the understanding of the disciples to understand the Scriptures.

Luke 24: 44-49 – “Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” “And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” “Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” “And you are witnesses of these things.” “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

Now, the Lord Jesus is speaking to his disciples from the vantage point of His having been raised from the dead, and He will soon ascend to sit at the right hand of the Father. He speaks to them reminding them that while he was still with them during the time of His earthly ministry which led to His going to the cross, that He had told them that He was going to have to go to the cross, but they did not understand it; that is in terms of their having understanding on this matter from the Scriptures. In John chapter 20, verse 8 when John and Peter ran to the tomb where Christ had

been buried after His crucifixion, it says – “Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he and believed.” “For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.”

So, we should understand that “even though they had had the advantage of Christ’s ministry for some years, and even though they had been raised, even from their childhood having the Scriptures read to them, that they still had need for the special illumination of the Spirit, and the influence of His grace to remove the darkness of their minds, and give the true sense of the sacred writings.” (Gill, in my own words) Now, we should make application to ourselves in relation to the things that Christ is saying here. Just because you have believed in Christ, and it is your real and true intention of following Him in accordance with His word, it does not necessarily mean that you understand the Scriptures in their depths of meaning unless the Holy Spirit illumines your mind to them.

This, by the way, accounts for the drastic differences in understanding between Christians and why some understand more than others, and even why some might be more effective and useful to the Lord in their particular ministry. Did not the apostles have the Spirit before the Day of Pentecost? Most surely they did. John 20: 21 and 22 – “Peace to you!” “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” “And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’. They had the Spirit, and they knew the Scriptures in a good general sense, but there were passages in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms, which spoke expressly of Christ’s having to suffer and to rise on the third day.

Peter certainly did not understand the Scriptures concerning these all-important things. In Matthew 26: 51 when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane and Judas came to betray Him, it says – “And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.” (This was Peter) “But Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.’ ‘Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?’ “How then could Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?” He is speaking about His having to be crucified for the sins of many; His having to suffer, and be killed and rise again on the third day.” Isaiah 50: 6, Isaiah 56: 2-12, Psalm 16: 9 and 10. “In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, ‘Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me?’ “I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me.” “But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” “Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.” Even this, their fleeing, was something that the Scriptures predicted would take place. Zechariah 13, verse 7 – “Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand against the little ones.” (The little ones, here, mean His disciples)

How could the apostles preach the Scriptures, saying that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to die and to rise again from the dead, if they did not understand the Scriptures related to these things at all? They had to have this illumination of the Spirit. Now, you may remember Matthew chapter 16, and what Peter did know and what he didn’t know before the Lord opened his eyes to understand the Scriptures, but turn over there with me. In verse 15, Jesus asked His disciples – “But who do you say that I am?” “Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’ “And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” “Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.”

“From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.” “Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’ Peter did not understand that Jesus must die for him. This was God’s

purpose. “They did not understand that saying.” Look that up in a Concordance. It is mentioned in Luke 9: 45. “But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying.” Now, we should learn from this experience of the apostles, not understanding what He would have to do, to accomplish salvation, and His expecting His disciples to learn its true meaning only when He was raised from the dead, that we too will have to learn things related to the sound doctrine of the Scriptures, by further light being shined on the Scriptures in relation to God’s purpose.