

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 1 – “Of the Holy Scriptures”, Message # 8 –
“The Certainty of Scripture”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class,
by Pastor Paul Rendall on August 11th, 2019.**

Paragraph 1 – The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, **cert**ain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience⁽¹⁾, although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary unto salvation⁽²⁾. Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself, and to declare that, His will, unto his church⁽³⁾; and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God’s revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.⁽⁴⁾

1) 2nd Timothy 3: 15-17; Isaiah 8: 20; Luke 16: 29 and 31; Ephesians 2 :20; 2) Romans 1: 19-21; 2: 14-15; Psalm 19: 1-3; 3) Hebrews 1: 1 4) Proverbs 22: 19-21; Romans 15: 4; 2nd Peter 1:1 9-20

In order for the Church to be established and comforted by the truth of the Scriptures, it needs to be understood by every Christian that there is a certainty to what God has had written down for our instruction. No true Christian should think that just because they cannot understand everything in the Scriptures that God has not been clear in what He has given to us in them. We must therefore pray as we read the scriptures and ask God for wisdom and help in interpreting them correctly.

1. God has made His will certain in the Scriptures, and He expects you to apply your heart to them, for it is a pleasant thing if you will keep them within you.

Proverbs 22: 17-21 – “Incline your ear (the King James Version says – “Bow down thine ear) and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge; For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you; let them all be fixed upon your lips, so that your trust may be in the LORD; I have instructed you today, even you.” “Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge, that I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth, that you may answer words of truth to those who send to you?”

We have here an exhortation to bow down our ear and hear the words of the wise; in our case of which we are studying this morning, it means the words of the Scripture, for it is here we find the words of the wise. We must apply our hearts to the knowledge which comes to us from Scriptures. When we are young especially, we must listen to our godly parent’s instruction when they are bringing to us the truth of the Bible, day by day. They must be fixed upon our lips; we must be ready to remind ourselves with them, and remember them to be able to share them with others. Solomon has written to us in the book of Proverb of excellent things; of morally excellent things, the things which God would have us to do, if we would be wise. Here are wise counsel and knowledge, that he might make us to know the certainty of the words of truth.

Joseph Benson says of these verses – “Hear the words of the wise — Of wise and holy men of God. And apply thy heart unto my knowledge — The knowledge of God, and of thy several duties which I am here delivering to thee. Thirst after it, and give thyself up to the diligent study of it. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them — Namely, the words of the wise; within thee —

Hebrew, in thy belly, that is, in thy heart; if thou receive them in love, and retain them in thy memory, so as to have them ready for use upon all occasions. They shall be fitted in thy lips — Fitly expressed; or, shall be disposed, or ordered, as יָנוּ signifies. The sense seems to be, When thou hast got them into thy heart, thou wilt be able and ready to discourse pertinently and profitably of them.”

He says on verses 19-21 — “That thy trust may be in the Lord — That, knowing God, and his word and promises, thou mayest cheerfully and confidently trust in him, which is the only way to thy safety and happiness. I have made known to thee this day — More fully than ever before; in this day of light and knowledge; in this thy day, the day of thy merciful visitation; excellent things — שְׁלִישִׁים, princely things, or leading things, “words fit for a prince to speak,” says Bishop Patrick, “and the best men of the world to hear, and therefore truly excellent.” Many of the ancient versions, however, read three-fold things, in which they are followed by Schultens and Grotius: the Jews distinguishing philosophy into three branches, morality, physics, and divinity; and Solomon having written in all those branches, as appears from 1 Kings 4., although most of his writings are lost. But, as the Hebrew word above quoted always signifies great captains, generals, nobles, or the best sort of musical instruments, “I look upon this,” namely, that first given, says the bishop, “the most proper interpretation of it.” In counsels and knowledge — Counsels to direct thy practice, and knowledge to inform thy mind. That I may make thee know the certainty, &c. — That I may teach thee, not false, or vain, or uncertain things, like the teachers of the heathen nations; but the true and infallible oracles of God; that thou mightest answer the words of truth — That, being instructed by me, thou mayest be able to give true, solid, and satisfactory answers; to them that send unto thee — Namely, for thy advice in great and difficult matters. Or, to those that send thee, that is, that employ thee in any business of moment, whereof they expect an account from thee.”

a. There is a certainty of the words of truth. God has placed this certainty there. Godly men of old received them by direct inspiration of God. And therefore, we should understand that the word of God does not change. It is always profitable, it is always excellent in counsel and knowledge. It cannot be added to, or anything taken away from. But we are told here that we are to apply our heart to the knowledge of God which is given to us from a godly father, even Solomon in his wisdom. He says that it is a pleasant thing if you are to keep these words of the Bible within us. There are many excellent things of counsels and knowledge in the Scriptures. They words are there so that your trust may be in the Lord. This is how God instructs men in all generations; by His word. This is how He instructs us today, even us. And so we are taught here, that it will be a pleasant thing if we keep them within us, and let them be fixed upon our lips, so that our trust may be in Christ, the Lord. And so the commandment to each of us here today is that we would incline our ear and hear these words of the wise, and apply our hearts to the knowledge that we will discover, as we look into them. Finding God’s will and receiving His instruction will be pleasing to you, God says, and we know that it will be pleasing to Him when He sees you abiding in His word and that you can give an answer to those who ask you about them, and that you can also give an answer to God who has sent you to teach others, as it says in the great commission — “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations....”

2. This certainty in the Scriptures has sometimes been called perspicuity by theologians.

Herman Bavinck, for instance says this in Vol. 1, P. 477 of his *Reformed Dogmatics* — “The doctrine of the perspicuity of Holy Scripture has frequently been misunderstood and

misrepresented, both by Protestants and Catholics.” “It does not mean that the matters and subjects with which Scripture deals are not mysteries that far exceed the reach of the human intellect.” “Nor does it assert that Scripture is clear in all its parts, so that no scientific exegesis is needed, or that, also in its doctrine of salvation, Scripture is plain and clear to every person without distinction.” “It means only that the truth, the knowledge of which is necessary to everyone for salvation, though not spelled out with equal clarity on every page of Scripture, is nevertheless presented throughout all of Scripture in such a simple and intelligible form that person concerned about the salvation of his or her soul can easily, by personal reading and study, learn to know that truth from Scripture without the assistance and guidance of the church and the priest.” “The way of salvation, not as it concerns the matter itself but as it concerns the mode of transmission, has been clearly set down there for the reader desirous of salvation.” “While that read may not understand the “how” (πώς) of it, the “that” (ὅτι) is clear.”