

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 17.-*Of the Perseverance of the Saints.*

III. Nevertheless, they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the World, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins¹; and, for a time, continue therein²: whereby they incurre Gods displeasure³, and grieve his holy Spirit⁴, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts⁵, have their hearts hardned⁶, and their consciences wounded⁷, hurt and scandalize others⁸, and bring temporall judgements upon themselves⁹.

Question 1.—*May the saints, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and, for a time, continue therein?*

Answer.—Yes. Matt. 26:70, 72, 74; Ps. 51:14 (also *title*). The perseverance of the saints does not secure them from partial falls, but from total and final apostasy, John 6:39. Our doctrine does not teach that many will not be finally lost, who are connected with the visible Church outwardly, and whom the Scriptures may call believers in a certain sense, because they have a temporary or historical faith, like that of Simon Magus, Acts 8:9, 18-21. But those who have once had in them the true principle of spiritual life, never lose it, 1 John 3:9. Patient Job cursed the day of his birth, Job 3:3. Moses, who was meek above all men which were upon the face of the earth, spake unadvisedly with his lips, Ps. 106:32, 33. David, who was a man after God's own heart, was guilty of an atrocious and a complicated sin, Ps. 51—*title*, verse 14. Solomon, though the wisest of men, did evil in the sight of the Lord, 1 Kings 11:6-8. But though the true saints of God may fall very low, so low that themselves and others may have little hope of their recovery, yet they shall not be utterly lost, for the hand of the Lord still in a measure sustains them, Ps. 37:24. It is not that the righteous never fall but rather that falling they will always get up again and be recovered to the faith, Prov. 24:16.

Question 2.—*Do they thereby incur God's displeasure and grieve the Holy Spirit?*

Answer.—Yes. Thus do the Antinomians err maintaining that the sins of the regenerate do not displease God, and cannot grieve his Holy Spirit, *cf.* 1 Thess. 5:19. They confuted for the following reasons: 1.) The prophet Isaiah says explicitly that God is angered by the sins of his people, Isa. 64:5, 7, 9. 2.) Because it is said that the thing

¹ Matt. 26:70, 72, 74.

² Ps. 51, *title*; ver. 14.

³ Isa. 64:5, 7, 9; 2 Sam. 11:27.

⁴ Eph. 4:30.

⁵ Ps. 51:8, 10, 12; Rev. 2:4; Song 5:2-4, 6.

⁶ Isa. 63:17; Mark 6:52; 16:14.

⁷ Ps. 32:3, 4; 51:8.

⁸ 2 Sam. 12:14.

⁹ Ps. 89:31, 32; 1 Cor. 11:32.

which David had done—his murder and adultery—displeased the Lord, 2 Sam. 11:27. 3.) Because the Scriptures testify that the sins of believers grieve his Holy Spirit, Eph. 4:30.

Question 3.—*Does sin deprive the saints of some measure of their graces and comforts?*

Answer.—Yes. Song 5:2-4, 6. The saints, by reason of their sins, are deprived of some measure of grace and consolation, Rev. 2:4. Often there is a loss of spiritual joy and that comfort of knowing the upholding power of God's free Spirit, even as David, Ps. 51:8, 10, 12.

Question 4.—*Might the saints by their grievous falls have their hearts hardened and consciences wounded?*

Answer.—Yes. Isa. 63:17. Through the unbelief of sin, it often falls out that the hearts of God's people are hardened, Mark 6:52; 16:14. Likewise, sin often afflicts and wounds the consciences of those who are saints, Ps. 32:3, 4; 51:8.

Question 5.—*May they, by their grievous falls, bring temporal judgments upon themselves?*

Answer.—Yes. Thus the Antinomians err maintaining that believers are not chastised in any way for their sins. They are confuted because the Lord has inflicted temporal punishments upon believers for their faults, Ps. 89:31, 32; 2 Sam. 12:11; 24:15; 1 Cor. 11:32.