

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.

Chapter 5.-Of Providence.

V. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season his owne children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sinnes, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption, and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled¹; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himselfe, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.²

Question 1.—*Doth God ever seduce a man to commit sin?*

Answer.—No. God does not solicit or seduce any man to sin; for this is inconsistent with the purity of his nature. Jas. 1:13, 14. Scripture asserts that the reprobate are delivered up to depraved lusts; but is it because the Lord depraves or corrupts their hearts? By no means; for their hearts are subjected to depraved lusts, because they are already corrupt and vicious, Matt. 15:18; Mark 7:21, 22. Thus, men are warned to keep their hearts, Prov. 4:23. However, since God blinds or hardens, is he not the author or minister of evil? Nay, but in this manner he punishes sins, and renders a just reward to the ungodly, who have refused to be ruled by his Spirit, Rom. 1:26. It hence follows that the origin of sin is not in God, and no blame can be imputed to him as though he took pleasure in evils, Gen. 6:6.

Question 2.—*But does not God, in righteous judgment, permit men to be both tempted and to fall into sin as just punishment for former sins?*

Answer.—Yes. God, in righteous judgment, sometimes permits persons to fall into one sin for the punishment of another, Rom. 1:27. He deals in this way even with his own dear, but undutiful children, 1 Chron. 21:1-4. Sometimes he leaves them for a season to temptations, and to the lusts of their own hearts, for their trial, or to discover to themselves the latent corruptions of their hearts to humble them, and to excite them to more fervent prayer and unremitting watchfulness, Matt. 26:41. Thus, God left Hezekiah to try him, that he might know, or make known, all that was in his heart, 2 Chron. 32:25, 26, 31. Sometimes God deals in this manner with his own children to chastise them for their former sins, as in 2 Sam. 24:1.

Question 3.—*Doth not God often leave his children unto manifold temptations to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself?*

Answer.—Yes. Thus, Paul was given a “thorn in the flesh” to draw him out of himself and his own strength to greater dependence on God, 2 Cor. 12:7-9. He calls it farther the messenger of Satan on this ground, that as all temptations are sent by Satan, so, whenever they assail us, they warn us that Satan is at hand, 1 Chron. 21:1. Hence, at every apprehension of temptation, it becomes us to arouse ourselves, and arm ourselves with promptitude for repelling Satan’s assaults, Eph. 6:11. It was most profitable for Paul to think of this, because this consideration did not allow him to exult like a man that was off his guard, Eph. 4:22.

¹ 2 Chron. 32:25, 26, 31; 2 Sam. 24:1.

² 2 Cor. 12:7-9; Ps. 73; 77:1-12; Mark 14:66f.; John 21:15-17.

Also, David's meditation on the temptation before him serves to bring him into more intimate communion with the Lord, Ps. 73. The Psalmist gives evidence that the tempting of any of God's children ought to end in the greater glory being given to God, Ps. 77:1, 10, 12.

Question 4.—*Doth not God's leaving of his children to manifold temptations and even falls into sin have for their end to make them more watchful against all future occasions into which they might be ensnared?*

Answer.—Yes. So, we see in the case of Peter, that his temptation and fall into sin had that very effect of making him more jealous to keep the precepts of his Lord, *cf.* Mark 14:66-72 *w/* John 21:15-17. Hence, in the way of discipline, we see that God, for the good of his people, to mortify their sins and to strengthen their graces, does often wisely and graciously, though never finally, for a season and to a degree, withdraw his spiritual influences from his own children, and "leave them to the manifold temptations and corruptions of their own hearts," 1 Cor. 10:12, 13.