

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 9.-Of Free-will.

IV. When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his naturall bondage under sin¹; and, by his grace alone, inables him freely to will, and to do that which is spiritually good²; yet so, as that by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not, perfectly, nor only, will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil³.

Question 1.—*Does God free a sinner from his natural bondage to sin, when He converts and translates him into a state of grace?*

Answer.—Yes. Col. 1:13; John 8:34, 36. It is not that the nature of man has changed, he has not ceased to be man, but he has exchanged the image of the earthy man for the image of the heavenly God, Gen. 5:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:47, 48; that is, the qualities of man's nature have changed, particularly those respecting knowledge, righteousness and holiness, being turned from the glory of God to the corrupt desires of man, Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:23, 24. Man, in a state of sin, fulfills the desires of the flesh and mind, which are corrupted by sin and have made the human nature which he possesses subject to the wrath of God, Eph. 2:2, 3. Regeneration is a real thorough change, whereby the man is made a new creature, or new creation, 2 Cor. 5:17. It consists of: 1.) A change of qualities or dispositions: it is not a change of the substance, but of the qualities of the soul, Ezek. 18:31; Luke 10:27. The old man is put off and the new put on, Eph. 4:22, 24. 2.) It is a supernatural change; he that is born again is born of the Spirit, John 3:5. The work that is needed is such that only God can perform in the man to bring about this change, Ezek. 11:19. 3.) It is a changing into the likeness of God, 2 Cor. 3:18. They that are born of God, bear God's image again, 1 Cor. 15:49. Man in his natural state resembles the devil, John 8:44. However, when a man is born again, the image of God is restored, Matt. 13:43. Christ himself is the pattern after which the new creature is made, Rom. 8:29; 13:14. Hence, he is said to be formed in the regenerate, Gal. 4:19. 4.) It is an universal change; all things become new, 2 Cor. 5:17. 5.) It is a lasting change, which never goes off, Phil. 1:6. The seed is incorruptible, 1 Pet. 1:23. His seed remains in him, who is born of God, 1 John 3:9. Though the branches should be cut off, the root shall abide in the earth, Prov. 12:3.

Question 2.—*Does God, by His grace alone, enable the converted sinner freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good?*

Answer.—Yes. Phil. 2:13; Rom. 6:18, 22. In regeneration, the will is renewed. The Lord takes away the stony heart, and gives a heart of flesh, Ezek. 36:26. The grace of God does not force it, but sweetly draws it, Ps. 110:3. There is a heavenly oratory in the Mediator's lips, to persuade sinners, Ps. 45:2. Thus 1.) The will is cured of its utter inability to will what is good, Phil 2:13. 2.) There is wrought in the will a fixed aversion to

¹ Col. 1:13; John 8:34, 36.

² Phil. 2:13; Rom. 6:18, 22.

³ Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:15, 18, 19, 21, 23.

evil, 2 Cor. 8:12. In regeneration, a man gets a new spirit put within him, Ezek. 36:26, and that spirit lusteth against the flesh, Gal. 5:17. While a man is unregenerate, sin lies at ease in the heart: but as soon as the Lord strikes the rocky heart with the rod of his strength, in the day of conversion, grace, as a well of water, springing up into everlasting life, John 4:14; 7:38; working away natural corruption, and gradually purifying the heart, Acts 15:9. 3.) The will is renewed with an inclination, bent and propensity to good, Phil. 3:14. As the former state was natural, so this is natural too, in respect of the new nature, Gal. 5:17. The renewed will brings back the sinner, out of himself, to God as his chief end, Ps. 73:25; Phil. 1:21.

Question 3.—*Does the regenerated sinner, by reason of his remaining corruption, will not perfectly nor only, that which is good, but that which is evil?*

Answer.—Yes. Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:15, 18, 19, 21, 23. 1.) Because in many things we offend all, Jas. 3:2. 2.) Because Christ commands us to seek daily remission of sins, Matt. 6:12; Luke 11:4. 3.) Because there is not a just man upon the earth, who doth not sin, 1 Kings 8:46; Eccl. 7:20. 4.) Because there is a continual war between the flesh and the Spirit; so that they, namely, the regenerate, are not able to do that which they are willing, and ought to do, Gal. 5:17. Because the regenerate are not able to fulfil the first command, namely, to love God with all their heart, with all their soul, Matt. 22:37, 38. For we know here but in part, and therefore we love but in part, 1 Cor. 13:9. Neither are the saints free of all those inordinate motions of concupiscence, forbidden in the tenth command, as is evident from Gal. 5:17. Moreover, from the experience of Paul, and of all the other saints, Rom. 7:21. 6.) Because if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, 1 John 1:8, 9. 7.) We see it from the grievous falls of the most eminent saints, as Noah, Lot, Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, and the disciples of Christ.