

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 14.-Of Saving Faith.

I. The grace of Faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls¹, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts²; and is ordinarily wrought by the Ministry of the Word³, by which also, and by the administration of the Sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened⁴.

Question 1.—*Is the grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe, to the saving of their souls, the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts?*

Answer.—Yes. Heb. 10:39; 2 Cor. 4:13; Eph. 1:17-19. Thus the Pelagians err, who maintain, faith to be a thing natural; who attribute the being thereof to ourselves, and to the strength of our corrupt nature. Thus, too, the Arminians err, who though they grant faith to be the gift of God, yet they deny faith to be given according to the precise will of God, for the saving of some men. The Pelagians are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Christ says, No man can come to me—that is, believe—unless the Father draws him, John 6:44. 2.) The apostle says, unto you it is given to believe, Phil. 1:29. 3.) Because that which is natural, is proper to all, but all men have not faith, 2 Thess. 3:2. 4.) Because faith is reckoned among the fruit of the Spirit, Gal. 5:22. 5.) Because the very desire itself of believing is from God, and not from ourselves, Phil. 2:13. 6.) Because Christ is the author and finisher of our faith, Heb. 12:2.

The Arminians are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because faith is given to the elect only, and to such as are ordained to eternal life, Tit. 1:1; Acts 13:48. 2.) Because he that believes, shall be saved, Mark 16:16; John 3:15,16,18,36. 3.) Because God wills precisely the glorifying of all those whom he justifies, Rom. 8:30. But they who have faith are justified, Rom. 5:1. 4.) Because God wills precisely the glorifying of all those, whom he inwardly and efficaciously calls, Rom. 8:30. But all that believe in him, are powerfully called, 2 Thess. 2:13,14. 5.) Because all the children of God are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, Rom. 8:17. But how many soever believe in his name, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, John 1:12.

Question 2.—*Is this faith ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word?*

Answer.—Yes. Rom. 10:14,17. Some allow of no other influences in this matter but the outward means. They explain away the plain import of those passages of Scripture which ascribe the production of faith to an immediate divine influence (*cf.* Eph. 2:8), as if no more were intended than that God furnishes men with the truth and its evidence, *e.g.*, John 20:31. According to their interpretation that emphatic declaration of Christ, John 6:44, simply means that the Father has given them the Scriptures. This is to substitute the means in the place of the efficient agent; and if the work is effected simply by the external means there can be no propriety in speaking of the Holy Spirit as having anything to do in

¹Heb. 10:39.

²2 Cor. 4:13; Eph. 1:17-19; Eph. 2:8.

³Rom. 10:14,17.

⁴1 Pet. 2:2; Acts 20:32; Rom. 4:11; Luke 17:5; Rom. 1:16,17.

the production of faith, *cf.* 1 Cor. 12:3; Acts 19:2. Thus, Paul calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of faith, 2 Cor. 4:13. Which is why, as noted, he tells us that faith is the fruit of the working of the Spirit, Gal. 5:22. Therefore, our Confession rightly and clearly distinguishes between the work of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the Word. There is a distinct and immediate influence of the Spirit on the heart, 2 Cor. 1:22; but the Spirit usually works by means, and the Word read or preached is the divinely appointed means by which he usually communicates his influence, *cf.* Rev. 2:7 *with* 1:3. Thus it was with Lydia, in common with others, she heard the Word preached by Paul, but “the Lord opened her heart,” Acts 16:14. So, too, the Spirit of God testifies against the unfaithful in Israel in and through the Word preached, Neh. 9:30. The apostle clearly distinguishes between the gospel and the power which renders it successful, 1 Thess. 1:5.

Question 3.—Is that faith by the ministry of the Word and by the administration of the Sacraments, and prayer, increased and strengthened?

Answer.—Yes. Acts 20:32; Rom. 4:11; 1:16,17. The faith of God’s elect can both increase and be strengthened by availing ourselves of the various means which God has provided for our use, Acts 2:42. The ministry of the word is appointed for the continued growth of believers in faith, 1 Pet. 2:2. Faith is not static, but can and should be increased in believers, Luke 17:5. In addition to ministry of the word, the ministration of the sacraments is given to call forth an increasing faith from those who already believe, 1 Cor. 11:24-26. Furthermore, in prayer the seeking believer is the recipient of those blessings designed to increase faith, Heb. 11:6; Mark 9:24.