

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 15.-*Of Repentance unto Life.*

V. Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, but it is every mans duty to endeavour to repent of his particular sins, particularly¹.

Question 1.—*Ought men to content themselves with a general repentance?*

Answer.—No. Ps. 19:13. That men ought to repent not only in general of the corruption of their hearts and sinfulness of their lives, but also of every particular sinful action of which they are conscious, and that when possible they should redress the wrong done by their actions, is a dictate alike of natural conscience and Scripture, Luke 19:8; 1 John 1:9. Though our repentance must be particular, yet a believer must grieve for all his sins universally, Ps. 38:18. Thus, the biblical ground for a call to repentance begins with the general duty, Isa. 55:7; Joel 2:12,13; Ezek. 33:11. The Christian will, of course, regret the guilt of Adam's first sin, but not repent of it, Eph. 2:3. He will, with David, acknowledge his birth-sin, Ps. 51:5. We have a root within that bears gall and wormwood, Deut. 29:18. But of the corruption of nature, of the concupiscence and inordinate desire of our hearts, it is our duty to repent, to feel blameworthy for them, to sorrow for, and to strive against them, just as of actual transgression; for this is not only our guilt, (imputed), but our proper sin, Job 42:5,6; Jer. 8:6. Possessing this corrupted nature, we are not only guilty but properly sinners, Job 15:14-16; Matt. 12:34; whereby we may be accounted generally wicked, though there is no specific sin in view, Prov. 21:4. However, Christians ought not to content themselves with a general view of sin; rather, they ought to mourn for particular sins and the root of them, Ps. 51:4. We should, by a strict and impartial examination of our hearts and ways, endeavor to obtain a discovery of those particular sins by which we have offended and dishonoured God, Ezek. 24:23.

Question 2.—*Is it every man's duty to endeavour to repent of his particular sins, particularly?*

Answer.—Yes. 1 Tim. 1:13,15. A wicked man acknowledges he is a sinner in general; he confesses sin by wholesale. His confession of sin is much like Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Dan. 2:3, but he cannot tell what it was, Dan. 2:5. In the same way a wicked man says, "Lord, I have sinned," but does not know what the sin is; at least he does not remember, whereas a true convert acknowledges his particular sins, Ps. 51:1, 14. No man has any right to presume that he hates sin in general unless he practically hates every sin in particular; and no man has any right to presume that he is sorry for and ready to renounce his own sins in general unless he is conscious of practically renouncing and grieving for each particular sin into which he falls, Ps. 38:18. Thus, when David was brought to the exercise of true repentance, he not only acknowledged in general that he had sinned, but he had his eyes upon that particular sin by which he had in a special manner dishonoured God, Ps. 51:3,4. Repentance is the medium of sanctification, and sin is only conquered by us in detail, Acts 11:18; 2 Cor. 7:10. Repentance is the medium which starves the flesh and mortifies sin, and though it be unto life, it is not itself that life,

¹Ps. 19:13; Luke 19:8; 1 Tim. 1:13,15.

Ezek. 33:10. There is no other way for a finite creature to fight the good fight of faith, 1 Tim. 6:12. Hence, it is obvious, every conscious, and especially every known recent transgression should be made the subject of particular repentance, 1 Cor. 15:9. The impenitent man cannot be forgiven, Luke 13:3,5; 24:47. Therefore, this particular repentance, which must be endeavored by a careful consideration, is necessarily involved in genuine repentance unto life, Ezek. 18:28. The returning prodigal, having come to himself, is enabled to realize this kind of particular repentance, noting the affront against both tables of the law inherent in his sins, together with the just reward they would incur, Luke 15:17-19.

What, then, shall we answer concerning those unconscious and forgotten transgressions (the "secret sins"), to which the attention and recollection of even the honest penitent never advert, in consequence of the limitation of his faculties and powers? *cf.* Lev. 4:2. After all, no man can reckon up all his sins in order, Ps. 19:12. We answer, that each Christian is aware of his guilt of these forgotten faults, and grieves over the general fact that he has them, Ezek. 7:16. And this general repentance is accepted; so that the atonement of Christ blots them out of God's book of remembrance, Acts 3:19. Repentance is that inward change of disposition which leads to the outward fruits of repentance, Acts 26:20. Thus, the Papists err maintaining that repentance consists in acts of penance, *cf.* Tit. 3:5.