

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 11.-*Of Justification.*

II. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification¹; yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by Love².

Question 1.—*Does faith justify us properly and by itself or only relatively and instrumentally?*

Answer.—All our opponents—Socinians, Arminians and Papists—agree in this—that faith justifies properly and by itself and so is our very righteousness—though with some differences. However, that faith justifies only relatively and instrumentally is to be seen by these considerations:—1.) Because what is only the instrument for receiving righteousness cannot be our righteousness itself formally, Rom. 4:5. Now faith holds here only the relation of an instrument, as is evident both from its proper act (which is instrumental and consists in the reception of Christ, John 1:12) and the acceptance of righteousness, Rom. 5:17, and of the remission of sins, Acts 26:18. 2.) Because faith is distinguished from the righteousness itself which is imputed to us, both because it is said to be “of faith” and “by faith,” Rom. 1:17; 3:22; Phil. 3:9, and because Christ with his obedience and satisfaction is that righteousness imputed to us, Isa. 53:11; Jer. 23:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13, 14, which faith indeed apprehends as its object, but with which it cannot be identified. Hence, Scripture nowhere says that God willed to count our faith for righteousness, but that he made Christ unto us righteousness, etc., 1 Cor. 1:30. 3.) Because we are not justified, except by a perfect righteousness, Ps. 130:3, 4. Furthermore, since our justification is a forensic and judicial act (wherein God shows himself just, Rom. 3:25), it does not admit of gracious acceptation, *cf.* Rom. 9:30. 4.) If faith is counted for righteousness, we will be justified by works because thus faith cannot but have the relation of a work which justifies, Gal. 3:11.

Question 2.—*Does faith alone justify?*

Answer.—Yes. 1.) Man is justified by faith without works, therefore by faith alone, Rom. 3:28; Eph. 2:8; Gal. 2:16. The reason of the consequence is manifest because there are not more modes of justifying than these two—by faith or by works. 2.) By faith alone are we justified by which the righteousness of Christ is applied to us, who satisfied the law for us, Gal. 2:21. Now this is done by faith alone; nor does it belong to love or to hope. 3.) We also are justified in the same way which Abraham, the father of believers, was justified because what was written concerning him pertains not only to him, but to us also, Rom. 4:24; Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:2. 4.) We are justified gratuitously and by the grace of God; therefore by faith alone because faith alone can consist with grace, Rom. 3:24, 25; 11:6. 5.) “The righteousness of God is said to be revealed from faith to faith,” Rom. 1:17. Herein the apostle intends to prove that the gospel is the power of God in opposition to the weakness of the law, Rom. 8:3; Heb. 7:19, because in it is the righteousness of God—not

¹ John 1:12; Rom. 3:28; 5:1.

² James 2:17, 22, 26; Gal. 5:6.

formally and subjectively (which is in God), but effectively (which is given to us by God); not inherent, because it is said to be manifested without the law by faith, Rom. 3:21, and to be imputed without works, Rom. 4:6, but imputed (which is opposed to man's righteousness and his own works, Rom. 10:3, 4; Phil. 3:9).

Question 3.—*Is faith, which is the alone instrument of justification, alone in the person justified?*

Answer.—No. James 2:17, 22, 26; Gal. 5:6. So then, the Papists err in maintaining that justifying faith may be truly and really separated from love, saving hope and all the rest of the Christian virtues. This is demonstrated: 1.) Because as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also, James 2:26. 2.) Because faith worketh by love, Gal. 5:6—that is, by showing forth the works of love in us, towards God and our neighbor, Mark 12:29; Gal. 5:22, 23. 3.) Because faith purifies the heart, Acts 15:9. 4.) Because he that has faith is in Christ; but he that is in Christ brings forth much fruit, John 15:5. 5.) Because those who have faith, are buried with Christ, and walk in newness of life, Rom. 6:6—that is, in holiness and purity, which accompany faith. 6.) Because he that says, I know God, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 1 John 2:4.

The works of which we speak consist in works which arise from the Spirit of God working in and through believers, not from the strength and power of the will of the corrupt nature, Gal. 3:3. As such, there is a demonstration of that the faith in believers is the proper fruit of the Holy Ghost moving within, John 6:29. The reality of the Spirit within produces that spiritual fruit from which Christians bless one another, 1 Thess. 1:2-4. These works, which are done in love, are always according to the will of God and not according to any self-chosen presumed "good works," 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. Since these are the works of love, they necessarily involve serving one another, Heb. 10:23. Thus, it is impossible for those who are unbelievers to do such works, James 1:22. In fact, it is often likely that these works will provoke the hatred and opposition of the wicked, John 7:7.