

## I. THE SOURCE OF FAITH

### A. Faith is not natural to man, but is worked in the elect sinner by the Holy Spirit.

#### 1. Some have imagined that faith is natural to man because man has “faith” in all kinds of everyday things. But that is not faith: that is more a weighing up of probabilities.

- a. People get on an airplane not because they trust the airline or the pilot but because statistically the likelihood of something awful happening is low. That is not the same as faith in God: faith *knows* that God is trustworthy, reliable and will not disappoint.
- b. An unbeliever *cannot* believe because he does not have the faculty of faith: he can no more work up in himself the ability to believe than a blind man can work up in himself the ability to see.
- c. Some have appealed to Rom. 12:3, “acc. as God hath dealt unto every man the measure of faith.” They teach that God has given every person a “measure of faith” which he can improve and use by the exercise of freewill. Paul is talking about every member *in the church!* (II Thess. 3:2).

#### 2. Faith is not man’s “part” in or “contribution” to salvation

- a. That is how Arminianism portrays it. Many gospel tracts present God as having done everything to prepare salvation. The sinner must exercise freewill to believe in Jesus and make Him Savior.
- b. This is what Arminianism means when it says that salvation is a gift: something God would like to give sinners but they must accept it.
- c. But that is not the meaning of “gift.” A gift is something *given*, that is, it is bestowed upon someone, so that he really does have it (see Canons III/IV:14).

#### 3. Faith is not a condition which man must perform in order to receive or even merit salvation

- a. A condition is something without which another thing cannot take place. The idea is a *prerequisite, something required beforehand*. Often a condition is introduced by “if.” e.g., “A prerequisite to entering the USA is a travel visa.” If you do not have a visa, you will not be allowed into the USA.”
- b. Faith is not a condition or prerequisite for salvation. Faith *is* necessary for salvation but that is not the same thing as a “condition.”
- c. Sometimes, in the past, theologians have said that faith is a conditional, meaning “the necessary means.” It is best, however, to avoid the word altogether (see Canons I, B, 3; II, B, 3; V, B, 1).
- d. It is incorrect to say that faith is the condition of salvation but God fulfills that condition. Faith cannot be a *condition* of salvation b/c faith *is* (a part of) salvation. In saving us He *gives* us faith.

### B. Against all notions of contribution, part or condition the Bible teaches that faith is *the gift of God*.

#### 1. Faith is the gift in God in that God gives it, bestows it, works it in the hearts of God’s people.

- a. Eph. 2:8, “By grace are ye saved through faith *and that not of yourselves*, it is the gift of God.” You did not believe by yourselves, out of yourselves; nor did you believe by some power of yourselves in cooperation with the work of God. Faith is not of you; it is the gift of God.
- b. The objection of the Arminian is: but the word “that” refers not to faith but to grace or to salvation. Grace and salvation are not of yourselves, but faith is! Not so: salvation, grace and faith [the whole package] is not of yourselves. It is not “of works” (any activity of man) but “of God.”
- c. Phil. 1:29 is, if anything, clearer: “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him but also to suffer for His sake.” The very act of believing on Christ has been given to you. You cannot make that a conditional gift: God will give it to you if you accept it. Then the text would teach absurdity: “It has been given to you to believe if you believe.” I will give you sight, if you see! Nonsense!

#### 2. The source of this gift of God, faith, is in election and in the cross.

- a. Why is it that only some, and not all believe? Why is it that God only gives this gift of faith to some? The answer is election: Acts 13:48; Tit. 1:1. Why would Paul thank God for the faith of believers unless God had given them that faith (e.g. Col. 1:3-4; I Thess. 2:13)?

- b. That faith is a gift of God purchased for us on the cross. Christ died so that we might have that faith (Phil. 1:29, “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ.” In the behalf of Christ means the cross!
- c. That, too, is what the Canons of Dort teach (II:8, “that He should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, He purchased for them by His death.”

## II. THE BOND OF FAITH (Heid. Cat., LD 7; Belgic Confession, 22).

### A. Faith is that bond which unites us to Jesus Christ so that we live out of Him.

1. **What Christ did for us (objectively) on Calvary must become ours by our being united to Him.**
  - a. We are *not* united to Jesus Christ by nature. By nature we are dead and united to Adam. We are both federally related to Adam (Adam represented us legally), and organically related to Adam (Adam’s natural life flows to us. We are born “flesh” and must become spiritual).
  - b. We cannot unite ourselves to Jesus Christ. That is the work of the Holy Spirit Himself.
  - c. The Holy Spirit unites us to Jesus Christ by creating a spiritual bond between Christ and us.
2. **We call that spiritual bond “faith.” By “faith” we mean both an activity and a bond.**
  - a. But the relationship between these two aspects of faith is important to understand. Arminianism has little interest in the bond because Arminianism teaches that man must choose to believe; then God will save him.
  - b. But the Bible teaches that first we are implanted into Christ or joined to Christ in a vital, living bond, and then out of that bond we believe. The activity depends on the bond.
  - c. Before there are visible signs of life there is life itself. e.g. Before you see the first green shoots of a sapling there are roots growing under the ground.
  - d. The bond of faith could be likened to the power of sight. A person who is not blind has the power of sight whether he exercises that power or not. e.g. he might close his eyes, but he still has the power of sight. But a blind man can open or close his eyes all day, he won’t see.

### B. The Bible speaks about the believer living *out of* Christ, and Christ living *in* the believer.

1. **The Bible uses two main figures to explain this.**
  - a. There is the union of a branch to the main stem (trunk, vine, etc) of the plant. The sap flows to each branch and the branch depends entirely on the main vine for life. But the branch in question is not natural to the vine but has been grafted by the farmer (John 15:5; Rom. 11:17). The graft (that which joins the branch to the vine) is faith.
  - b. There is the union of the members of the body to the head of the body. The blood supply flows to all the members who are attached to the body. Again the spiritual, living union is faith (Eph. 5:30; Col. 1:18).
  - c. Proof that the bond is faith is found in the expression “by faith” (Lit. “out of [Greek: *ek*] faith”) found throughout the NT (e.g. Rom. 5:1) or the expression “believe in (Lit. “into [Greek: *eis*] Christ.”
  - d. You will notice that the figures which illustrate the bond of faith are living, not lifeless. It is better to avoid lifeless examples: faith is not a lifeless pipe bringing water or a lifeless socket connecting one to the power supply.
2. **Out of this vital bond of faith – a living, intimate spiritual, mysterious bond – the believer lives and Christ lives in the believer. You can call this the “mystical union.”**
  - a. Some theologians have even placed the mystical union first in the Ordo Salutis. Faith comes third in the Ordo Salutis (regeneration, calling, faith) *only in terms of the activity of faith*.
  - b. “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20). That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love (Eph 3:17).
  - c. Therefore, since faith is a vital connection to Jesus we can grow in Him and into Him (Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:6-7, 19). *Only if faith is a vital bond is all possibility of faith as a work or a condition ruled out, because no one can join himself or herself to Jesus Christ as a condition of salvation.*