

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 18.-*Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation.*

IV. True beleevers may have the assurance of their salvation divers wayes shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin, which woundeth the conscience, and grieveth the spirit; by, some sudden, or vehement temptation, by Gods withdrawing the light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darknesse and to have no light¹: yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart, and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this Assurance may, in due time, be revived²; & by the which, in the mean time, they are supported from utter despair³.

Question 1.—*May true believers have the assurance of their salvation diverse ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted?*

Answer.—Yes. Song 5:2,3,6; Ps. 88; Isa. 50:10. We may observe some particular ways which the providence of God points out to us, to which we may in various respects ascribe our want of assurance. 1.) The weakening or intermitting of assurance is sometimes occasioned by manifold distempers, or bodily diseases, Ps. 77:1-10. The soul and body are so closely joined to and dependent upon each other, that the one can hardly suffer without the other, Ps. 6:1-6. 2.) There are many sins which are the occasion of a person's being destitute of assurance, Ps. 40:12. As all the troubles of life are brought upon us by sin; so are all our doubts and fears, arising from the want of a comfortable sense or interest in the love of God, Ps. 51:8,12,14. Careless walking puts out assurance, especially sinning against the light, whereby the Spirit is grieved, and withdraws his light, Eph. 4:29-31. 3.) Assurance is often weakened and intermitted through the manifold temptations, Matt. 16:23. Satan is very active in this matter, and shows enmity against the interest of Christ in the souls of his people, as much as lies in his power, Luke 22:32 *compared with* Matt. 26:69-72. 4.) A believer's want of assurance is, for the most part, attended with, and arises from, divine desertion, Ps. 31:22.

Question 2.—*Are true believers, when they fall into some special sin which wounds the conscience, and grieves the Spirit, destitute of the seed of God, and life of faith?*

Answer.—No. Job 13:15; Ps. 73:15; Isa. 50:10. Thus, the Quakers and others err maintaining that true believers falling into some special sin, can have nothing of the life of faith, and the seed of God in them. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God, 1 John 3:9. For his seed remaineth in him; that is, it does not utterly perish, but abides thenceforward, working the fruits of regeneration once begun in them, Phil. 1:6. 2.) Because although Peter fell into grievous

¹Song 5:2,3,6; Ps. 51:8,12,14; Eph. 4:30,31; Ps. 77:1-10; Matt. 26:69-72; Ps. 31:22; Ps. 88; Isa. 50:10.

²1 John 3:9; Luke 22:32; Job 13:15; Ps. 73:15; Ps. 51:8,12; Isa. 50:10.

³Micah 7:7-9; Jer. 32:40; Isa. 54:7-10; Ps. 22:1; Ps. 88.

sin of denying his master thrice, yet he still retained that seed of God, and life of faith, and love to Christ; because Christ had said unto him, I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, Luke 22:32. The like may be said of David, Ps. 51:8,12, and others of the saints of God, who by falling into some special sins, have wounded the conscience, and grieved the Holy Spirit, Eph. 4:30; Prov. 18:14.

Question 3.—*Are not true believers, though having wounded the conscience and grieved the Holy Spirit, yet kept by the operations of that same Spirit from utter despair?*

Answer.—Yes. Ps. 22:1; Ps. 88. Although a believer may have despairing apprehensions concerning his state, and though the guilt of sin may lie upon him like a great weight so as to depress his spirits; yet he shall not sink into endless misery; for though darkness may continue for a night, light and joy shall come in the morning, Micah 7:7-9. Consequently, though for a time a true believer may despair of his condition due to the divine desertion, yet it is neither total nor final, Isa. 54:7-10. We read of some in Heb. 2:15, who are without that assurance throughout their lifetime. Even those who never attain that infallible assurance, yet there are sufficient glimmerings—having the fear of God implanted in their hearts—that keep them from utter despair, Jer. 32:40. Our salvation depends upon our state, not our knowledge of it.