

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTIONS # 72 & 86.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #72. *What is justifying faith?*

A. Justifying faith is a saving grace,¹ wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit² and word of God,³ whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition,⁴ not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the gospel,⁵ but received and rested upon Christ and his righteousness, therein held forth, for pardon of sin,⁶ and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation.⁷

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #86. *What is faith in Jesus Christ?*

A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace,⁸ whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.⁹

Question 1—*How is justifying faith a saving grace?*

Answer—There are four sorts of faith spoken of in Scripture: 1.) Historical faith, which is a bare assent to the truths of God, Jas. 2:19. 2.) Temporary faith, which is such an assent, joined with some affection to the truths of God, though unsanctified, Luke 8:13. 3.) Faith of miracles, which is a belief of the Lord's working some miraculous effect by us, upon some intimations of his word concerning it, 1 Cor. 13:2. 4.) Justifying faith, which is a saving faith because all that have it shall certainly be saved for ever from sin and God's wrath, Heb. 10:39. Indeed, as soon as one has it, salvation is his, it is in his possession as to the beginnings of it, Acts 16:31.

This faith saves us, not as an act or work, fulfilling the condition of a new law, for so it is excluded, with all other works, from the causing of our salvation, Rom. 3:27, 28. But it saves as an instrument, apprehending Christ and his salvation, Rom. 3:22.

Question 2—*From whence does this faith proceed?*

Answer—This faith does not arise from any natural powers, the power of man's free-will, or any other natural source, John 6:44. Instead, it is a special gift of God, which is made to arise in the heart of the sinner by the Spirit of God and, therefore called the Spirit of faith, 2 Cor. 4:13. This faith is wrought in the heart by a divine power which alone can produce

¹ Heb. 10:39.

² 2 Cor. 4:13; Eph. 1:17-19.

³ Rom. 10:14, 17.

⁴ Acts 2:37; 16:30; John 16:8, 9; Rom. 5:6; Eph. 2:1; Acts 4:12.

⁵ Eph. 1:13.

⁶ John 1:12; Acts 16:31; 10:43.

⁷ Phil. 3:9; Acts 15:11.

⁸ Heb. 10:39.

⁹ John 1:12; Isa. 26:3, 4; Phil. 3:9; Gal. 2:16.

such an effect, Eph. 1:17-19. Thus, it is a gift given on behalf of Christ to believe on him, Phil. 1:29. Furthermore, the outward means, which the Lord usually makes use of to beget faith in one's heart, is the Word, the word of the Gospel, whether preached, read or heard, Rom. 10:14, 17. This is that incorruptible seed of which the new creature is framed, 1 Pet. 1:23.

Question 3—*What are the ends of this faith?*

Answer—The *first* end of this faith is to bring those who are wrought upon by the Word and Spirit to a sound conviction of their sin and misery so that they are made aware of their great spiritual need, Acts 2:37; 16:30. It is the great office of the Spirit of God to work in fallen man that conviction because he now lies in spiritual darkness being ignorant of his grave peril, John 16:8, 9. So, the Spirit must, by the Word, convince him that he is unable, by reason of his native disability, to help himself, being without strength, Rom. 5:6; moreover, being in a state most aptly compared to death, Eph. 2:1. From this lost condition, neither he nor any other mere creature can recover him, his hope must find place in another, Acts 4:12.

The *next* end, therefore, is to move him to place his assent in the promise of the Gospel, knowing that it is true and holds forth great promise, Eph. 1:13. It holds forth the fullness of Christ's salvation: 1.) Salvation from sin, Matt. 1:21. 2.) Salvation from wrath to come, 1 Thess. 1:10.

Finally, this faith receives and rests upon Christ and his righteousness held forth for pardon of sin, Gal. 2:16. This faith receives and rests upon Christ as he is offered in the Gospel, in all his offices, Isa. 26:3, 4. Thus, faith receives Christ: 1.) As a prophet to be our teacher, guide and leader, renouncing our own wisdom, Matt. 17:5. 2.) As a priest, renouncing all merit and confidence in one's self, duties and sufferings, and betaking one's self to Christ, his obedience and death, for all, Isa. 45:24. 3.) As a king, renouncing all strange lords, and receiving him for absolute governor in the soul and over the whole man, yielding to bear the yoke of all his commands, Isa. 26:13.

Question 4—*What is the object of this faith?*

Answer—The general object of this faith is the whole Word of God, and therefore there is no falsehood under faith, Tit. 1:2. However, the special object is the promise of the Gospel, Acts 16:31. This faith is itself the very power to believe on the name of the only Son of God, Jesus, for salvation, John 1:12. This receiving and resting has a particular eye to the priestly office of Christ and the shedding of his blood, Isa. 45:22; the eating of his flesh, and drinking of his blood, John 6:53; and submitting to his righteousness, Rom. 10:3. In other words, the special object of this faith is particularly concerning Christ's ability to save, Mark 9:23. Sin is a weight the soul is unable to remove, but the Gospel holds forth Christ as most able to remove it, Heb. 7:25.

Question 5—*What is the subject of this faith?*

Answer—The subject of this faith is not all men, for not all men have it, 2 Thess. 3:2. Those who have it are elect sinners, Tit. 1:1. And they do all get it before they go out of this world, Acts 13:48. The subjects include those who lived under the Old as well as the New Testaments, Heb. 11:13.

Justifying faith, then, is that instrument whereby salvation is made sure to elect believers, Acts 16:31. It is the alone instrumental means whereby men find remission of sin before God, Acts 10:43. Faith that justifies accepts and accounts the person of Christ as righteous in the sight of God unto salvation, Phil. 3:9; Acts 15:11.