

10. Saving faith and repentance that leads to life

WCF chapters 14-15 *Modern Language version – 1993 – OPC*

14.1. The grace of faith, by which the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily produced through the ministry of the Word. This faith is increased and strengthened by the same means, and also by the administration of the sacraments and prayer.

2. By this faith, a Christian believes to be true whatever is revealed in the Word, because of the authority of God himself speaking in it. He also responds differently to what each particular passage contains—obeying the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

3. This faith varies in degrees. It may be weak or strong. It may often, and in many ways, be assailed and weakened, but it gains the victory. It matures in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and the perfecter of our faith.

Saving faith: if you want to know God's salvation you MUST believe – Romans 1:16-17

How do we believe?

Enabled to believe
– Ephesians 2:8

Through the work of the Spirit
– Ezekiel 11:19-20, 36:26-27

Through the ordinary means of grace: preaching, sacraments and prayer

- Romans 10:14,17, 1 Peter 2:2, Acts 20:32
- Romans 4:11, a "seal"
- Luke 17:5, "increase our faith!"

What is saving faith?

Trusting God's Word, the Bible – e.g. 1 Thess. 2:13

Obey commands – e.g. Rom. 16:26

Fear warnings – e.g. Isa. 66:2

Embrace promises – e.g. Heb. 11:13

**** Resting on Christ alone ****

Salvation is in Him & in His covenant...

So, we rest ON HIM

- e.g. John 1:12, Acts 15:7

The ups and downs of true faith

Reality: some Christians are weak in faith... & all Christians are weak in faith sometimes

- Heb. 5:13-14, Rom. 4:19-20, Matt. 6:30, 8:10

Assaults of sin, suffering and Satan...

Jesus' prayer (Lk. 22:32)... the shield of faith (Eph. 6:16)

Victory: 1 John 5:4

Full assurance of faith (Heb. 6:11,12, 10:22)

Though we don't always feel it...

Remember: "When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast..."

15.1. Repentance unto life is a gospel grace, the doctrine of which is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, just as is the doctrine of faith in Christ.

2. By it a sinner—seeing and sensing not only the danger but also the filthiness and hatefulness of his sins, because they are contrary to God's holy nature and his righteous law—turns from all his sins to God in the realization that God promises mercy in Christ to those who repent, and so grieves for and hates his sins that he determines and endeavours to walk with God in all the ways that he commands.

3. Although repentance is not to be relied on as any payment of the penalty for sin, or any cause of the pardon of sin (which is God's act of free grace in Christ); yet repentance is so necessary for all sinners, that no one may expect pardon without it.

4. No sin is so small that it does not deserve damnation. Nor is any sin so great that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent.

5. No one should be satisfied with a general repentance; rather, it is everyone's duty to endeavour to repent of each particular sin, particularly.

6. It is the duty of each one to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for pardon (and whoever confesses his sins, prays for forgiveness, and forsakes those sins shall find mercy). Similarly, anyone who has scandalized a brother, or the church of Christ, ought to be willing by private or public confession, and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended, who are then to be reconciled to him and receive him in love.

Repentance that leads to life

Bible basics

Repentance & belief go together – e.g. Mark 1:14-15, Acts 20:21

Repentance is a gracious gift of God – Acts 5:31

Repentance is part of the Gospel: as we look on Christ and His Cross we begin to see our sin...

Moved by danger... and by sin's horror (e.g. Isa. 30:22)... in the light of God's holiness (e.g. Ps. 51:4)...

The sinner "TURNS": towards our merciful God... and from sin to holiness – e.g. 1 Thess. 1:9-10

Is repentance necessary?

Repentance does NOT pay for our sin – we can NEVER repay God for our sin... and do not need to: free grace – Rom. 3:24

Repentance is NECESSARY for salvation... because of the sinfulness of ALL sin – Luke 13:3-5, Matt. 12:36

No sin is too great for forgiveness – Isaiah. 1:16, 55:7, Rom. 8:1

What does repentance look like?

General... but not always general.

Particular (e.g. 1 Thess. 1:9-10 – idolatry):

Realize we commit specific sins

Name those sins

Turn from those sins – e.g. Luke 19:8

Always confess sin privately to God – e.g. Ps. 51

Sometimes need to confess sin to others: those we have wronged... when sin itself is public – e.g. Ps. 51, James 5:16, Luke 17:3-4

We remember: forgiven people love to welcome other repentant sinners – 2 Cor. 2:7-8

Personal response: for what should we give thanks... confess... pray?