

## XLI.

## Testimonies.

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”—*Heb. xi. 6.*



In order to prevent the possibility of being led into paths of error, faith is directed, not to a Christ of the imagination, but to “the Christ in the garments of the Sacred Scripture,” as Calvin expresses it.

And therefore we must discriminate between (1) faith as a *faculty* implanted in the soul without our knowledge; (2) faith as a *power* whereby this implanted faculty begins to act; and (3) faith as a *result*,—since with this faith (1) we hold the Sacred Scripture for truth, (2) take refuge in Christ, and (3) are firmly assured of our salvation in inseparable love for Immanuel.

To which must finally be added that this is the work of the Holy Spirit alone, who (1) gave us the Holy Scriptures; (2) implanted the faculty of faith; (3) caused this faculty to act; (4) made this faith to manifest itself in the act; (5) thereby witnessed to our souls concerning the Sacred Scriptures; (6) enabled us to accept Immanuel with all His treasures; and, lastly, made us find in the love of Immanuel the pledge of our salvation.

Wholly different from this is the *historical* faith, which Brakel briefly describes as follows: “Historical faith is thus called because it knows the history, the narrative, the description of the matters of faith in the Word, acknowledges them to be the truth, and then leaves them alone as matters that concern it no more than the histories of the world; for one can not use them in his business, neither does it create any emotion in the soul, not even sufficiently to cause man to make a confession: ‘Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well, the devils also believe and tremble’ (*James ii. 19*). ‘King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest’ (*Acts xxvi. 27*).”

Next comes *temporary* faith, of which Brakel gives the following description: “*Temporary faith* is a knowledge of and a consent to the truths of the Gospel, acknowledging them as the truth; which causes some natural flutterings in the affections and passions of the soul, a confession of these truths in the Church, and an external walk in conformity with that confession; but without a real union with Christ, to justification, sanctification, and redemption. ‘But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the Word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet, hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word; by and by he is offended’ (*Matt. xiii. 20, 21*). ‘For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift; and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance’ (*Heb. vi. 4, 5*). ‘For if, after they have escaped the pollution of the



world through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning' (2 Peter ii. 20)."

There is also a *faith of miracles*, which Brakel describes in these words: "The *faith of miracles* is a being inwardly persuaded, by an inward working of God, that this or that work shall be wrought, in a supernatural manner, upon our word or command, in ourselves or in others. But the ability to perform miracles is not of man, but of God, by His almighty power, in answer to faith: 'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you' (Matt. xvii. 20). 'And tho I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains' (2 Cor. xiii. 2). 'The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked' (Acts xiv. 9, 10). This faith was found especially in the days of Christ and of the apostles, for the confirmation of the truth of the Gospel."

These three kinds of faith do in some respects resemble saving faith, but they lack its *being*. Least of all is the faith to perform miracles, which was found also in Judas. Faith which removes mountains is not justifying faith. *Historical* faith comes a little nearer, unless, by reason of a slothfulness and indifference, it merely echoes the words of others without accepting their truth, and thus opens the way to Pharisaism. *Temporary faith* comes nearest, which is indeed wrought by the Holy Spirit, and affords a taste of the heavenly gifts, but which has not root in itself. It is a bouquet of flowers, that for a day adorns the breast of the person who wears it, but which, being cut from its root, is not a plant in him.

Finally, we might speak of faith in its *most general sense*, which is the absence of all hesitation, doubt, or obstacle to receiving in ourselves the immediate and direct inworking of the holy majesty of God, and of the majesty of His truth, in such a penetrating manner that spontaneously we believe that the Word and Being of God are the ground and foundation of all things. In this general sense St. Paul says that, "Without faith it is impossible to please God"; (Heb. vi. 11) and in this most general sense faith also belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ. But this is not a saving faith, for it has nothing to do with salvation.

*Saving faith* embraces Christ. How could such Christ-embracing faith dwell in Immanuel?

Rather than to spend our strength in proving this clear fact, we lay before our readers Comrie's beautiful exposition of the saving knowledge of faith, in which he speaks in the following penetrating manner:



"We will shortly enumerate the objects of this knowledge of faith:

"First, this knowledge *is a divine light of the Holy Ghost, through the Word, by which I become acquainted, to some extent, with the contents of the Gospel of salvation*, which hitherto was to me a sealed book; which, altho I understood it after the letter and in its connections, I could not apply to myself, to direct and support my soul in the great distress, conflict, and anguish which the knowledge of God and of myself had brought upon me. But now it became plain and knowable to me. Now I learn by the inshining of the Holy Ghost the contents of the Gospel, so that I can deal and commune with it. And so I suck from these breasts of consolation the pure, rational, and unadulterated milk of the everlasting Word of God. Truly, the souls that are really humbled by the imparted faith do not derive any benefit from their own notions and opinions of the truth of the Gospel; on the contrary, they tend to fill them with dismay, because their knowledge which is so great is of no use to them whatever. I have known men of excellent letter-knowledge who, by reason of their natural understanding of the truth, in their legal-fear almost cried out in the words of devils: 'Thou comest to torment us before our time.' Only remember Spira and others. I believe that the letter-knowledge of the Gospel, which was despised here, shall be a hell in hell. For it often occurs that this understanding of the letter, which is only an assent to the truth by itself, when neglected causes the soul to think: 'This is not for me, but for others.' God knows how many a poor soul sinks away in this depth, and is kept there by others who speak boastingly. However, when the Holy Spirit causes the divine Gospel to shine into the dark prison of the soul, to illuminate the eyes of the inwrought faith with a heavenly and divine light, the soul receives the Gospel as good news, and as a word of instruction, encouragement, and direction; and is led, by it, step by step, as a child, which from its A B C learns to spell and read. Now it is: 'Behold, I see a way appear!' And then: 'Great sinners have been saved, surely there must be hope for me!' In the distance the gates of the City of Refuge are seen wide open, and Jesus is waiting behind those walls—yea, His glory is seen shining through the gates. And in this way, by means of the heavenly light, which pours in upon the inwrought faith, the soul obtains knowledge of the secret of the Lord in Christ, who is revealed to her. How often this knowledge causes the soul to go out in holy desires, we need not tell. Many seem to attain with one step or bound the highest degree; but, like noble exotics, the true faith grows slowly, step by step, from preceding depths of humiliation, until it is perfected in actual work and exercise.



Second, this knowledge is *a divine light of the Holy Spirit in, from, and through the Gospel, by which I know Christ, who is its Alpha and Omega, as the glorious, precious, excellent, and soul-rejoicing Pearl and Treasure hid in this field.* Altho I knew all things, and I did not know Jesus by the light of the Spirit, my soul would be a shop full of miseries; a sepulcher appearing beautiful without, but within full of dead men's bones. And this knowledge of Christ, imparted to the soul by the inshining of divine light, through the Gospel, can never from itself give any light to the soul so long as it is not accompanied by the immediate inworking and illumination of the Holy Spirit. For it is not the letter which is effectually working in the soul, but the direct working of the Holy Spirit by means of the letter.

"And now you may ask, In what respect must I know Jesus? We will confine ourselves to the following matters: This knowledge of faith, the object of which is Christ in the Gospel, is a knowledge by which I know, through the divine light of the Holy Spirit, my absolute need of Christ. I see that I owe ten thousand talents, and that I have not a farthing to pay; and that I must have a surety to pay my debts. I see that I am a lost sinner, who is in need of a Savior. I see that I am dead and impotent in myself and that I need Him who is able to quicken me and to save me. I see that before God I can not stand, and that I need Him as a go-between. I see that I go astray, and that He must seek after me. Oh! the more this necessity of Christ presses upon me, from this true knowledge of faith, the more earnest, intense, heart-melting, and persevering the outgoings of my soul are from the inwrought faith, and attended with greater conflict., Many do not appreciate them because they, do not have them, but, being the effects of the Holy Spirit and the results of the inwrought faith, they are pleasing to God, to whom they are directed. For *He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and will not despise their prayer—Psalm cii. 17.*

"Third, it is through this knowledge *that I, by the light of the Spirit, know Jesus in the Gospel, as adapted in every respect to my need.* It is the very conviction of the fitness of a thing which persuades the affections to choose that thing above every other; which makes one resolute and persevering in spite of every obstacle, never to abandon the determination to secure to himself the thing or person chosen for this fitness to his need. You can see it in the matter of marriage.



"A young man may judge it absolutely necessary for him to marry. And yet, altho convinced of this necessity, he is groping in the dark. Now he is fully determined, and to-morrow he is not. Now he wants this woman, and the next day another. But as soon as he meets a person whom he considers adapted to him in every respect, he is fully resolved. This fitness is the arrow that penetrates his soul, and that causes the scale of his unsettled affections to turn in favor of the congenial object. Hence nothing can draw him away from her so long as he considers her adapted to himself; if need be he will work for her as a slave twice seven years which time will seem to him but as so many days by reason of the hope to call her his own in the end.

"And this can easily be applied to the spiritual. It shows that altho one may be convinced of his need of Christ as his Savior, yet so long as he does not see and know Him by faith as wonderfully adapted to his person in particular, the affections are not drawn to Him. From which it follows that many, in ordinary soul-trouble, act so undecidedly: to-day they desire Christ, and to-morrow they do not. This moment they wish to be converted, and the next they do not. This is the reason that many who once were touched by Christ's fitness to their need, and therefore were seekers after Him for a season, go back again and no more ask for Him, simply because they do not think Him so much adapted to their need as to be able for His sake to bear the heat of the day and the cold of the night, or sacrifice all things, to possess Him. And this proves that they never have known His real fitness, that they never have seen it with the eye of faith; otherwise the seed of God would have remained in them. But when the divine light of the Holy Spirit, in the Gospel, illuminates my soul, and I receive this knowledge of faith from Jesus, oh! then I see in Him such fitness as a Surety, a Mediator, a Prophet, Priest, and King that my soul is touched in such a measure that I judge it impossible to live another happy hour, except this Jesus becomes my Jesus. My affections are inclined, taken up, directed, and settled upon this object, and my resolution is so great, so determined, so immovable, that if it required the loss of life and property, of father and mother, sister, brother, wife and child, right eye or right hand—yea, tho I were condemned to die at the stake, I would lightly esteem all this, and would suffer it with joy, to have this wonderfully fit Savior to be my Savior and my Jesus. Oh! my friends, examine your hearts, for, from the very nature of the case, anything less than this will not suffice. If you possess this you will joyfully part with all your sins, you will bid an eternal and joyful adieu to your most cherished lusts and bosom passions; it will make you count all your righteousnesses, which you esteemed a gain, nothing but loss, rejecting them as unprofitable refuse, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; it will make you take joyfully the spoiling of your goods; it will make you count it an honor, with the apostle, to be scourged for Christ's sake; it will make you say: 'Tho I have not yet found Him, and am only seeking after Him, whom my soul loveth, and altho I dare not say, My Beloved is mine and I am His, yet if I were to labor for Him twice seven years, and spend them in groaning and weeping, in tears and supplications, I would count them but as so many days, if only at last I might find Him to be my own. God Himself must fix your mind upon these things; these results are the infallible signs of the inward root of the matter.



"Fourth, this knowledge of faith *is a divine light of the Holy Spirit by which I know Christ in the Gospel in all His sufficient fulness*. By this I see not only that He is well disposed toward poor sinners such as myself—for a man might be favorably disposed toward another to assist him in his misery, but he might lack the power and the means to do so, and the best that he could do might be to pity the wretch and say, 'I pity your misery, but I can not help you'—but this divine light teaches me that Christ can save to the uttermost; that tho my sins are as scarlet and crimson, heavier than the mountains, greater in number than the hairs of, my head and the sands of the seashore, there is such abundance of satisfaction and merits in the satisfaction, by virtue of His Person, that, tho I had the sins of the human race, they would be, compared to the satisfaction of Christ, which has by virtue of His Person an infinite value, as a drop to a bucket and as a small dust in the balance. And this convinces my soul that my sin, instead of being an obstacle, much rather adds to the glory of the redemption, that sovereign grace was pleased to make me an everlasting monument of infinite compassion. Formerly, I always confessed my sin reluctantly; it was wrung from my lips against my will only because I was driven to it by my anguish, for I always thought, The more I confess my sin, the farther I will be from salvation and the nearer my approach to eternal condemnation; and, fool that I was, I disguised my guilt. But, since I know that Jesus is so all-sufficient, now I, cry out, much more with my heart than with my lips, 'Tho I were a blasphemer and a persecutor and all that is wicked, *this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*' And, if need be, I am ready to sign this with my blood, to the glory of sovereign grace. In this way every believer, if he stands in this attitude will feel inclined to testify with me.



"Fifth, it is this knowledge by which I know, *in the light of the Holy Spirit shining into my soul through the Gospel Jesus Christ, as the most willing and most ready Savior, who not only has the power to save and to reconcile my soul to God, but who is also exceedingly willing to save me.* 'My God, what is it that has brought about such a change in my soul? I am dumb and ashamed; Lord Jesus, to stand before Thee, by reason of the wrong I have done Thee, and of the hard thoughts which I entertained concerning Thee, O precious Jesus! I thought that Thou wast unwilling and I willing; I thought that the fault lay with Thee and not with me; I thought that I was a willing sinner and that Thou hadst to be entreated with much crying and praying and tears to make of Thee, *unwilling* Jesus, a *willing* Christ; and I could not believe the fault lay with me.'

"This opposition or controversy often lasts a long time between the sincere soul and Christ, and never ends until by the divine light one sees the willingness of Jesus. However, it must not be supposed that there has been no faith in the soul during that time. But it may be said that, altho there has been faith, there has been no exercise of faith in relation to this matter. And when this appears, the soul says: 'With great shame and confusion of soul I now see Thy willingness. Thou hast given me the evidence of Thy willingness by Thy coming into the world, by Thy suffering of the penalty, by Thy invitation to me, and by the perseverance of Thy work upon my heart. I recall my former unbelieving words, spoken from the deep unbelief of my heart, and I cry out': 'Thou art a willing Christ and I was an unwilling sinner. My God, now I feel that Thou art too mighty for me, Thou hast persuaded me; and now in this day of Thy power I will not and can not hesitate any longer, but with my hand I write it down that I will be the Lord's.'

"The believing knowledge of the willingness of Jesus, in the light of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, makes me see my former unwillingness. But as soon as this light arises in the soul the will is immediately bent over and submissive. They who say that Jesus is willing, but that I remain unwilling, speak from mere theory; but they lack the knowledge of faith, and have not discovered this truth. For as the shadow follows the body, and the effect the cause, so is the believing knowledge of the willingness of Christ toward me immediately followed by my willingness toward Him, with perfect abandonment of myself to Him. Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power ([Psalm cx. 3](#)).



"Lastly, by this knowledge *through the promise of the Gospel, and by the light of the Holy Spirit, I learn to know the Person of the Mediator in His personal glory, being so near to Him that I can deal with Him.* I say, 'in the promise of the Gospel,' to show the difference between a vision of ecstasy like that of Stephen and the conceited knowledge of which heretics speak outside of and against the Word. The Word is the only mirror in which Christ can be seen and known by saving faith. And herein I see Him in His personal glory with the eye of faith, so near as I ever have seen any object with the bodily eye. For this inwrought faith and the light of the Holy Spirit shining thereon brings the Person Himself in substantial form to the soul, so that she falls in love with Him, and is so enchanted with Him that she exclaims: 'My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. For His love is stronger than death; jealousy is more cruel than the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, flames of the Lord. Many waters can not quench that love; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned' ( [Cant. iii. 10](#); [viii. 6, 7](#)).

"My beloved, faith embraces not only the words and letters of the Gospel, but Christ Himself in them. Faith converses, not with the letter alone, but with Christ in the letter. Faith has two foundations, *the Word* and *the Substance*. It does not build upon, the *Word* alone, which is the letter of the Gospel; but also upon the Substance in the Word. viz., Jesus Christ— [1 Cor. iii. 11](#). The Gospel is a mirror, but if Christ does not appear before the mirror, He cannot be seen. And when He presents Himself, it is not the mirror which is the end of faith, but the Image seen in the mirror. It is wisdom rightly to discern this."

Is this not beautifully said? The Lord our God grant to many of us this rich and pure delight.

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**THE  
WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

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**VOLUME THREE**

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Individual (Continued).

