

**Lecture 12-The Holy Spirit; Faith****Prayer**

*Grant, Almighty God, that, as we are prone to every kind of wickedness, and are easily led away to imitate it when there is any excuse for going astray, and any opportunity is offered; O grant that, being strengthened by the help of Thy Spirit, we may continue in purity of faith, and that what we have learned concerning Thee, that Thou art a Spirit, may so profit us that we may worship Thee in Spirit and with a sincere heart, and never turn aside after the corruptions of the world nor think we can deceive Thee. But may we so devote our souls and bodies to Thee that our life may in every part of it testify that we are a pure and holy sacrifice to Thee in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

**The Holy Spirit; Faith****I. Book 3- "The Way in Which We Receive the Grace of Christ: What Benefits Come to us from it, and What Effects Follow"**

- A. The grace of Christ - Book 2
- B. The way in which we receive the grace of Christ: Book 3 (3, 1, 1)
  - 1. The Holy Spirit (3, 1)
  - 2. Faith (3, 2)
- C. What benefits come to us from it
  - 1. Regeneration/sanctification (3, 3-10)
  - 2. Justification (3, 11-18)
- D. What effects follow
  - 1. Holiness of life

**II. The Holy Spirit**

- A. The person of the Holy Spirit (1, 13)
- B. The work of the Holy Spirit (3, 1, 1)
  - 1. The bond by which Christ effectually unites us to Himself
  - 2. Necessary agent of our redemption
- C. Calvin's trinitarian structure

**III. Faith**

Definition: "A firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (3, 2, 7)

- A. Faith is "knowledge"
  - 1. Not the "implicit faith" of the scholastics (3, 2, 2)
  - 2. But an "explicit recognition of the divine goodness" (although "most things are now implicit for us" [3, 2, 2; 3, 2, 3])
- B. Faith is knowledge of "God's benevolence toward us" (3, 2, 6 - Calvin descends "by degrees from general to particular")
  - 1. The Word of God (3, 2, 29; 3, 2, 6; 3, 2, 7)
  - 2. God's mercy (3, 2, 7; 3, 2, 6; 3, 2, 29; 3, 2, 43)
- C. Faith is "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us"
  - 1. "There is no right faith except when we dare with tranquil hearts to stand in God's sight" (3, 2, 15)
  - 2. But Calvin recognizes that our faith is not perfect (*Commentary* on Mark 9:24; see also *Institutes* 4, 14, 7)
  - 3. And is often under attack (3, 2, 17; 3, 2, 18)
  - 4. But the outcome of the struggle is not in doubt
  - 5. (3, 2, 21; *Commentary* on Psalm 94:18)

6. Existing faith: "A steady and certain knowledge invariably attacked by vicious doubts and fears over which it is finally victorious"
7. Faith includes assurance
  - a. Assurance leads us to confidence in a future "immortality" (3, 2, 40)
  - b. Assurance does not rest on "moral conjecture" (3, 2, 38; 3, 14, 16 [good works are a "prop of the second order"])
  - c. The foundation of assurance is the Gospel (3, 15 [justification by faith]; Commentary on Hebrews 6:19)
  - d. Assurance in the Reformed tradition (*Westminster Confession of Faith* 18, 1)
  - e. The problem of transitory faith (3, 2, 11; *Commentary* on Acts 8:13 ["some middle position between faith and mere pretense"])
- D. Faith is "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts"
  1. Faith is more than "common assent to the Gospel history"
  2. "It is more of the heart than of the brain, and more of the disposition than of the understanding" (3, 2, 8)
    - a. Persuasion (3, 2, 14)
    - b. Recognition (3, 2, 14)
    - c. Assurance (3, 2, 8)
- E. "Through the Holy Spirit"
  1. "Faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit" (3, 2, 4; 3, 2, 25)
  2. Faith is "a singular gift of God" (3, 2, 23)
    - a. Not a meritorious condition
    - b. But "the instrumental cause" of salvation (3, 11, 7; 3, 14, 17 & 21)

**For Further Study:**

John Calvin has been called "the theologian of the Holy Spirit," but no significant treatment of Calvin's doctrine of the Holy Spirit has appeared, as far as I know. The debate concerning Calvin's views of faith and assurance has produced a number of works, including:

Kendall, R. T. *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Bell, M. Charles. *Calvin and Scottish Theology*. Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1986.

Lane, A. N. S., "Calvin's Doctrine of Assurance." *Vox Evangelica* 11.

Cunningham, William. *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1862.

An older but important work.

Shepherd, Victor A. *The Nature and Function of Faith in the Theology of John Calvin*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983.

A thorough study of this topic.