

## Chapter 2

### FAITH

#### 1. Sin: guilt and remission

##### 1.1 The fall in Paradise — disobedience and the striving to be like God.

- Sin is punishable

Look at the contents of Exodus 34:6-7: “6And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation”.

- Remission: by His propitiatory sacrifice, man is declared righteous in Christ and forgiven, however his sin is not denied.
  - Acts 10:43: “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins”.
  - Acts 4:12: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”.
  - 1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”.

This is the essential difference between the Christian doctrine and all other religions.

##### 1.2 On what grounds are some declared righteous in Christ and forgiven?

- Not all people are forgiven.
- Christ redeems only those who are incorporated in Him by a true faith.
- Which is everyone, who with confession of guilt, accepts Him as their Redeemer and Saviour. None are able to do so unless the Holy Spirit enables him.
- Ultimately we are saved by grace alone, with faith as the means by which we avail ourselves of that grace. We cannot boast of our faith as if it were our achievement.

Read:

- Matthew 22:14: “For many are called, but few are chosen”.
- John 3:36: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him”.
- Romans 3:28: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law”.

##### 1.3 Can everyone believe in Christ’s redemption?

No. Only those people can for whom God makes it possible to believe.

For many it is never possible — in fact they mock it.

Just a few Scripture references

- Matthew 13:11: “He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given”.
- Matthew 19:11: “But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given”.
- Mark 4:11: “And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables”.
- Luke 8:10: “And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand”.
- John 6:65: “And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come

unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father”.

- 1.4 In the Last Judgement God will find us guilty of all of our trespasses, but the faithful will not go to hell, because God will declare them righteous in Jesus Christ. This means that God will forgive us all our sins, but He is not going to deny that we committed it!
- 1.5 All people are not redeemed by Christ. He redeems only the people who are incorporated in Him by a true faith. Our confession teaches that the people who are redeemed are those who appropriate Christ’s benefits (read: Matt. 22:14 & John 3:36).
- 1.6 Only those people whom God enables to believe, are able to believe (*NB.*, read: Matt. 13:11; 19:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10 & John 6:65).
- 1.7 Christ suffered for only those people whom the Father gave to Him, and who believe (John 17:9).
- 1.8 Which does not mean to say that the work of Christ is insufficient. The work of Christ was so perfect that it could reconcile the sins of the entire world (CD 2:3).
- 1.9 The Holy Spirit incorporates us into Christ by a true faith. Practically this means that the Holy Spirit effects faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel and then He strengthens it by use of the sacraments (together with this read: HC 2:5:25:65:a-c & Eph. 2:8).
- 1.10 *By the proclamation of the Gospel we understand the formal sermons in church.* The official preaching is indeed used to work faith in our hearts (read: Jas. 1:18; Rom. 10:13-17: “... call upon ... believe ... hear ... preach ... is sent”).

## 2. What is true faith?

### 2.1 Faith

How the Bible reveals it, is explained in the Heidelberg Catechism, *q.* 21.

- Especially Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”. Also the other Scripture references in the Heidelberg Catechism.
- Faith is the answer which the Lord by His Holy Spirit, through re-generation, works in my heart — my answer to what the Lord says to me and asks of me.
- Thus it is a spiritual gift, something which I possess and which directs my life. It comes to expression in my life, everything that I am, that I think and that I do.

What is faith?

- It is a sure knowledge, whereby I know that everything which God reveals in the Bible, is the truth.
- Further it is a firm confidence which is affected by the Holy Spirit, in my heart, so that like other people, I also receive forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness and salvation as a gift from God.

I receive it by grace alone, for the sake of the merits of Christ.

Faith thus has two parts:

- Sure knowledge
- Firm confidence

Faith is a living connection with the Only God, because it is to know God and to trust in

Him.

Practically: to respond to the gospel

Faith is not something which is poured out into us. Faith is a deed that proceeds from one. But at the same time it is also a reaction to that which God says to you and that which He requires of you.

Faith is also a spiritual gift — therefore it is indeed also something which you possess. Thus it is something which you have and something that you do.

In sum: A true faith is:

a sure knowledge;

- a firm confidence; and
- it is followed by good works which are born of this faith.

## 2.2 Unbelief

- There is an important difference between true and false faith.
  - A true faith is as set out above.
  - A false faith is also faith — but it is a wrong and dead faith.
  - False faith often approximates true faith and false faith can often have an attractive external appearance.
- Unbelief is not an inborn deficiency.
- It is sin because we disobediently make a positive choice against God. John 3:18: “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

## 2.3 False faith manifests under the following guises.

- Historical faith
- To know all the facts in the Bible to be true, but it is of no consequence to one. Accordingly the facts mean nothing for such a person’s salvation. Satan has historical faith, because he knows the Bible word for word, but it goes no further than that (read Jas. 2:19).
- Fleeting faith
- It has a good start, but it does not last. Diminishes over time and eventually dissipates completely (read Matt. 13).
- Miracle faith
- Faith exclusively dependent on signs and wonders, the sensation of seeing wonders and/or of doing it oneself.

Abovementioned forms of false faith can also be called the semblance of faith (read Matt. 13:1-23).

## 3. Profession of faith

3.1 As soon as a baptised member reaches spiritual maturity, he/she publicly, in the presence of the whole congregation and before God, professes his/her faith. During this event the congregation bears witness to this profession of faith.

3.2 To profess faith, means that you assume responsibility for your baptismal-responsibilities. Which is to say that the promise to God which was sealed at baptism, is now accepted by the baptised and he/she undertakes to henceforth keep the consequences of this calling and covenant, in obedience to God.

The baptismal promise is:

- God confirms that the baptised belongs to Him; and
- the parents undertake to teach, instruct and raise the baptised in this doctrine.

- 3.3 God demands that we profess our faith, because it is the covenant calling (read: Rom. 10:9-10 & Matt. 10:32).
- 3.4 If someone does not believe, the Lord is not to be blamed, as He earnestly offers salvation in Christ to all equally — however, there is an obligation to believe. Man himself stands accused if he refuses to believe (read: CD 3/4:8-9; Heb. 10:38; 3:19 & 1 Pet. 2:7).
- 3.5 There is a distinct relationship between election and faith. Faith is not the ground for election, but the fruit thereof. Stated differently: we are not elected because we believe. We believe exactly because we are the elect (NB.: Eph. 1:4; CD 3/4:7 & 9).

#### 4. Evil spirits

The Lord views as evil, everything which is directed against Him, which is disobedient and is unholy. Evil spirits are thus spirits who resist God, they are those who are unholy and bad, who harm God's honour and all that is dear to Him.

Evil clearly exists. Evil is evil spirits who cause destruction.

Matthew 13:38: "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one."

Acts 19:12: "So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."

When we look at the contents of Deuteronomy 28:35 it is evident that evil has a durable aspect: "The Lord shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head."

##### 4.1 Evil spirits and humans

- Evil spirits are capable of attacking people

Acts 19:15: "And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?"

Acts 19:16: "And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."

- Evil spirits and a group of people

There are instances where an evil spirit(s) works with groups of people. Such evil spirits can attack groups of people and cause them to act wrongly / foolishly / badly.

Such examples are found in:

Judges 9:23: "Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech"

Jeremiah 7:2: "But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward."

Jeremiah 8:3: "And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the Lord of hosts."

- Evil spirits and individuals

We read of various instances where Saul had trouble with an evil spirit which took possession of him. The evil spirit apparently took complete control of him. The impression is not given that he did or could resist the evil spirit.

1 Samuel 16:14: "But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from

the Lord troubled him.”

1 Samuel 16:15: “And Saul’s servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.”

The question is whether evil spirits are scared of music? And if so: of what type of music? Is there something like satanic/evil music? What type of music did David make?

Read the following Bible passages:

1 Samuel 16:16: “Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.”

1 Samuel 16:23: “And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.”

#### 4.2 What happens where evil spirits are at work?

- Evil spirits cause people to act insanely and unwisely

Samuel 18:10: “And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul’s hand.”

- When evil spirits take possession of someone, his condition can worsen

Matthew 12:45: “Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”

Matthew 13:19: “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.”

1 Timothy 6:4: “He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings”

1 John 3:12: “Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.”

#### 4.3 How can people break with evil spirits?

- We can be released from evil spirits

The Lord Jesus’ death on the cross was that He saved us from an evil world — thus also from all of the evil spirits and from the power of their commander, the devil.

Galatians 1:4: “Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father”

Colossians 1:21: “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled”

2 Thessalonians 3:3: “But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.”

2 Timothy 4:18: “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

- People can resist / oppose evil spirits

Matthew 5:37: “But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

Acts 19:13: “Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.”

Ephesians 6:12: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

Ephesians 6:16: “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

- Conversion breaks evils’ power over people. God restores them.

Jeremiah 3:17: “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.”

Zechariah 1:4: “Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord.”

Luke 7:21: “And in that same hour he cured many of *their* infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many *that were* blind he gave sight.”

#### 4.4 God does not excuse people who obey evil spirits.

The inference we draw from the Bible, is that someone who is involved with evil spirits, willingly subjects himself to them. Therefore the Lord punishes such behaviour. Such people are lost. So that when he is obedient to evil spirits, something of man’s own responsibility comes in to play.

Jeremiah 11:8: “Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not.”

Jeremiah 16:12: “And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me”.

Jeremiah 18:12: “And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.”

#### 4.5 We must pray that the Lord will deliver us from evil spirits

Matthew 6:13; Luke 11:4: “And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.”

Luke 8:2: “And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils”

John 17:15: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”

1 John 5:18: “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”

#### 4.6 What does our Confession teach?

##### Heidelberg Catechism

Question 127: What is the sixth petition?

Answer: And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. That is: In ourselves we are so weak that we cannot stand even for a moment (a). Moreover, our sworn enemies –the devil (b), the world (c), and our own flesh (d)– do not cease to attack us. Wilt Thou, therefore, uphold and strengthen us by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, so that in this spiritual war (e) we may not go down to defeat, but always firmly resist our enemies, until we finally obtain the complete victory (f).

- ( a) Ps. 103:14-16; John 15:1-5. (b) 2 Cor. 11:14; Eph. 6:10-13; 1 Pet. 5:8. (c) John 15:18-21. (d) Rom. 7:23; Gal. 5:17. (e) Matt. 10:19, 20; 26:41; Mark 13:33; Rom. 5:3-5. (f) 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23.

Question 128: How do you conclude your prayer?

Answer: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. That is: All this we ask of Thee because, as our King, having power over all things, Thou art both

willing and able to give us all that is good (a), and because not we but Thy holy Name should so receive all glory for ever (b).

(a) Rom. 10:11-13; 2 Pet. 2:9. (b) Ps. 115:1; Jer. 33:8, 9; John 14:13.

### Belgic Confession of Faith

#### Article 12 (The Creation of All Things)

We believe that the Father created heaven and earth and all other creatures from nothing, when it seemed good to him, by his Word — that is to say, by his Son.

- He has given all creatures their being, form, and appearance, and their various functions for serving their Creator.
- Even now he also sustains and governs them all, according to his eternal providence, and by his infinite power, that they may serve man, in order that man may serve God.
- He has also created the angels good, that they might be his messengers and serve his elect.

Some of them have fallen from the excellence in which God created them into eternal perdition; and the others have persisted and remained in their original state, by the grace of God.

- The devils and evil spirits are so corrupt that they are enemies of God and of everything good.
- They lie in wait for the church –and every member of it– like thieves, with all their power, to destroy and spoil everything by their deceptions.
- So then, by their own wickedness they are condemned to everlasting damnation, daily awaiting their torments.
- For that reason we detest the error of the Sadducees, who deny that there are spirits and angels, and also the error of the Manicheans, who say that the devils originated by themselves, being evil by nature, without having been corrupted.

Isa. 40:26; Matt. 28:19; 1 John 5:15; Acts 5:3; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:11; Rom. 8:9; Col. 1:16; 1 Tim. 4:3; Heb. 3:4; Rev. 4:11; 11:16; Heb. 1:14; Ps. 103:21; 34:8; John 8:44; 2 Pet. 2:4; Luke 8:31; Matt. 25:41; Acts 23:8; Matt. 4.

#### 4.7 Supplementary verses from Scripture

Hebrews 3:12: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

1 John 2:13: “I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.”

1 John 2:14: “I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.”

1 John 5:19: “And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” 2 John 1:11: “For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

Revelation 16:2: “And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.”