

Heidelberg Catechism 65-66–How Does Faith Come?

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: If someone told you there was a medical cure for Covid-19, that they and others used it, and that it worked 100% of the time, but the person didn't tell you the name of the medicine, which company makes it, or how you could get it, that good cure is useless to you, isn't it? **It might be a real cure, but it is meaningless.**

Now you have been told you need faith to live. But that is not good enough. Today you will learn what faith is and how you can get it.

Our headings are:

Faith Comes through the Holy Spirit through the Word

Faith Confirmed by the Holy Spirit through the Sacraments

Our goals are: That you will be thankful **you can receive the gift of faith so you can receive the work of Jesus and be saved and sanctified.**

Faith comes through the Holy Spirit through the Word

65 Q. IT IS BY FAITH ALONE THAT WE SHARE IN CHRIST AND ALL HIS BLESSINGS: **WHERE THEN DOES THAT FAITH COME FROM?**

A. The **Holy Spirit produces it** in our hearts by the **preaching of the holy gospel**, and **confirms it through our use of the holy sacraments.**

1. Faith is the means by which you receive God's salvation through Jesus Christ.

Faith is like a hand or a mouth of the soul – a noun. Faith itself is not rewarded. Faith is a gift.

Since faith is not rewarded and is simply a gift you use for receiving God's gift of salvation, faith is an ego-busting gift.
Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved **through faith**, and that **not of yourselves**; it is **the gift of God**, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

2. God gives you this essential faith, through his Holy Spirit.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water **and the Spirit**, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Those who believe they only get the Holy Spirit later in life after they become spiritually pure, are denying God's Word. Since only the Holy Spirit of God can help you to believe, **if you have no Holy Spirit, you are not saved** but are still in your sins! If you are a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit within you forever. **So those who are Reformed, believe more in the Holy Spirit than our Pentecostal brothers.** The Holy Spirit is essential to your regeneration (conversion) and your sanctification. (You don't get him because you are pure; you get him to make you pure!)

1Corinthians 2:11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? **Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.** 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, **that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.** 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches **but which the Holy Spirit teaches**, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Notice in Verse 13 how the **Holy Spirit continues to teach throughout your life.** He makes your faith stronger!

3. The Holy Spirit gives you this essential faith, through the Word of God – the sixty-six books of the Bible.

Romans 10:14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" 17 **So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

To the end of the existence of the earth, the Word of God will be **critical for giving new life to the non-believer, and the sustaining of life to the believer.**

1Peter 1:23 **having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God** which lives and abides forever, 24 because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, 25 **But the word of the LORD endures forever.**" Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

So those who reject the Bible will not and cannot be saved.

This is not reason for personal boasting; this is reason to be thankful, to bow in worship, and to preach the Gospel to those who are lost.

4. To get the full benefit of the Bible you have to study it regularly, listen to it, get help when you need to understand something difficult, and pray for the Holy Spirit to work through the Word to increase your faith.

Those who preach the Word must do so with boldness because **preaching is essential to Christ's kingdom being built.**

5. Other religions have interesting books with some helpful history, but God will not use them to give you faith.

The Book of Mormons, the Watchtower Bible, Ellen G. White's writings, the Hindu Gita and Ramayana, Confucius' writings, the Apocrypha, or the Koran will not be used by the Holy Spirit to give you faith. No Bible, no salvation!

So lift up the message of Jesus (his life, death, burial, and resurrection) that blind eyes will be opened and God will give them faith to receive his promises. Jesus, after his resurrection, gave a command to his disciples to **go and preach the Gospel** (through which faith comes) so men might be brought into his kingdom.

Do not manipulate people into the kingdom. Those who try to **guilt manipulate people into faith are wrong.** Those who use psychology—telling people **Christ will fill the hole in their heart and give them friends** if they just accept him, misunderstand what he is saying. Teaching people to imitate Christian life and worship doesn't make them into Christians.

1Corinthians 9:16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, **woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!**

6. Initially, God spoke directly to people he loved, like Adam, Noah, and Abraham, about the coming Messiah – the Savior.

God's gave verbal words to create faith in them so they would trust in the coming Savior and be justified.

God spoke through prophets like Moses, Nathan, Isaiah, and Jeremiah (who all spoke of Christ-Luke 24).

God gave many beautiful pictures of Christ's work through the ceremonies and sacrifices of the Old Testament.

God's Holy Spirit worked through the message to create faith in the hearers so they would trust in the coming Savior.

God then gave his Son Jesus and the Apostles who spoke and completed the Word of God, which, when preached, the Holy Spirit uses to create faith in the hearer.

Acts 2:37 Now **when they heard this,** they were **cut to the heart,** and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

You see this at Pentecost where 3000 men, plus women and children were joined to the church. Then they showed their faith by continuing in preaching, prayer, sacraments, and Christian fellowship.

So teach your children now. Let the Holy Spirit work. Let them be saved through faith and grow in grace. Believing in Christ's birth is not enough! That only stokes emotions! They need the full picture!

Faith confirmed by the Holy Spirit through the Sacraments

1. The first obvious question is: What are sacraments?

66 Q. WHAT ARE SACRAMENTS?

A. Sacraments are **holy signs** and **seals** for us to see. They were **instituted by God** so that by our use of them he might make us **understand more clearly the promise of the gospel,** and might put his seal on that promise. And this is God's gospel promise: to forgive our sins and give us eternal life by grace alone because of Christ's one sacrifice finished on the cross.

2. God always marked his covenant with man with holy signs and seals.

When God made the promise of Jesus' sacrifice to Adam and Eve, he killed an animal and used the **skin as a covering** for them, picturing their covering from sin. When God rescued Noah and his family, **Noah had to kill animals to remember the picture of their salvation** through substitution. When God entered into covenant with Abraham, **God required circumcision,** where the foreskin died – a picture of being made clean.

Genesis 17:10 "This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; 11 "and **you shall be circumcised** in the flesh of your foreskins, and **it shall be a sign** of the covenant between Me and you.

God explained that circumcision symbolized the cleaning of the heart.

Deuteronomy 30:6 "And the LORD your God **will circumcise your heart** and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

God, when he set Israel free from Egypt, marked that freedom with the **death of the Passover Lamb.**

3. The 1st sacrament is baptism, which is a sign and seal of forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

a. You are the subject and God is the agent in Baptism.

b. Baptism is a sign you can see reminding you your sins have been washed away.

c. Baptism is a seal you can feel reminding you you are the property of Jesus. Seal shows ownership.

Romans 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, **a seal of the righteousness of the faith** which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also,

God knows man's faith is weak and wants to reassure him, remind him, and guarantee him that he is property of the Lord.

d. God commanded baptism for you and your children.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."

4. The 2nd sacrament is the Lord Supper which is a sign a seal of the work of Jesus Christ to save you.

a. You are the receiver and Jesus Christ the giver.

b. The bread and the wine symbolized (it is a sign that you can see, touch, and taste) the body of Jesus Christ that was broken and his red blood that fell to the ground.

Matthew 26:27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

c. The bread and the wine are a seal that you can feel in your soul that you belong to Jesus and he is feeding you. For as surely as you eat the bread and drink the wine you are assured you are receiving his grace, having been reconciled to God and received his forgiveness. **This strengthens your faith!**

d. It is a command to eat (Take eat, take drink – 1Corinthians 11:24-25).

5. So it wasn't enough to preach and win the lost, and it wasn't enough to preach to the converted: The Lord demands those who have heard the preached word and believe ought to be baptized and participate in the Lord's Supper.

Matthew 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...

Those who think they can survive outside of the church and so avoid the sacraments are defying the Lord of the church and should repent, come to the church, and be nourished.

1Corinthians 10:16 **The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?**

Conclusion:

Faith comes by the Holy Spirit **through the read, proclaimed, and believed Word of God.** **Faith is sustained by the Holy Spirit through that same word and through receiving the sacraments**—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Those who avoid these holy sacraments are sentenced to spiritual malnutrition, even spiritual death.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Having receive faith that cause you to receive what Jesus did for you, get perspective. Others are attached to beautiful buildings, big congregation, and influential preachers, but you must learn, love, and submit to the Word of God and his holy sacraments. These will strengthen your faith and make you grow as a Christian! Big buildings, famous preachers, and large congregations don't!

2. So don't miss the Word and sacraments. Christmas will come and go, but you need faith all year! Use the Word and sacraments! Let them remind you you are God's child through Jesus all year. Your sins are gone!

3. Invite others to eat and live. Don't let them starve and die.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, Jesus offers his body and blood for you so that you can be saved from judgment. Ask! And he continues to sustain you through his Word and sacraments after you are saved!