

Heidelberg Catechism 65-66—How Does Faith Come?

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: If someone told you about some new medical cure, for allergies for instance – this being Spring, but the person didn't tell you what the name of the medicine is, which company makes it, or how you can get it, then the cure is useless to you. It might be a real cure, but it is meaningless. Today you will learn from God's words how you can get the hands of faith that you need for your salvation and sanctification. Specifically, you will hear from God's Word about the mechanism through which God gives this essential hand of faith.

Our headings are: **Faith Comes through the Holy Spirit through the Word**, and **Faith is Confirmed by the Holy Spirit through the Sacraments**. 圣礼

Our goals are: That you will **pursue faith by grabbing on to the Word of God, and visibly and invisibly holding on to the Sacraments**, and that in doing this, you will grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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 what God offers to you.** Faith is like a hand. Faith is a taker – it is a noun.

(Therefore faith is not rewarded...justification is rewarded.) Faith is a gift. Faith is an ego-busting 自我破坏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.

You have to have the Holy Spirit to have faith. Those who foolishly believe you only get the Holy Spirit later in life after you become spiritually pure, are denying God's Word. In fact, only the Holy Spirit of God can help you to believe. So no Spirit, no faith.

1Corinthians 2:10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 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. 14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

And notice in Verse 13 how the Holy Spirit continues to teach throughout your life.

3. Specifically, 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**. This is why you are often reassured of the eternity of God's Words.

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 do not have a chance of being saved. But don't use this as a means for personal boasting. Be **thankful, for sure, but use this knowledge as a means of laboring for the lost**. When you lift up the message of Jesus Christ (his crucifixion and his resurrection), then the blind eyes will be opened and God will give him faith to receive his promises. Jesus, after his resurrection, gave commission – a command- to his disciples to **go and preach the Gospel (through which faith comes)** that men might be brought into this kingdom.

4. To get the full benefit of Bible you have to study it regularly, listen to it, get help when you need to understand

something difficult, pray for the Holy Spirit to work through the Word to increase your faith, and preach with boldness. After you believe, you are to command men to repent. You are not to manipulate people into the kingdom. Those who try to guilt manipulate people into faith are failing the Lord. Those who use psychology – telling people that Christ will fill the hole in their heart if they just accept him into their lives, misunderstand what he is saying. You are to straightly preach truth and call men to faith.

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! 17 For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.

A certain characteristic of one who is weak in his faith is that he is weak in his study of the Word of God.

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

The writings of 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... Praise him for what you have! Work for those who do not have the means of faith!

6. Initially, God spoke directly to people he loved, like Adam, Noah, and Abraham about the Messiah. His Holy Spirit then worked through God's verbal words, as opposed to his written word that we have now, to create faith in them so they would trust in the coming Savior and be justified. Later God spoke through prophets like Moses, Nathan, David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah (who all spoke of Christ-Luke 24). Then God's Holy Spirit worked through the message they heard to create faith in the hearers so they would trust in the coming Savior. Then Jesus and the Apostles spoke and you now have the full Word of God, which when preached, the Holy Spirit uses to create faith in the hearer so you will trust in Jesus Christ. This is nicely illustrated for us in Acts 2:

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?"

Three thousand men, plus women and children, believed on Pentecost and they were joined to the church. Then they showed their faith by continuing in the "Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." Keep this in mind with your family as well. Children need truth. Start teaching them there. Don't wait for teachers... or elders...or pastors. Start yourself!

Faith is confirmed by the Holy Spirit through the Sacraments

1. The obvious question in this 2nd point is: What are sacraments? Let's look at the doctrine of the church.

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.

So Sacraments are holy signs and seal for you to clearly see the promise of the Gospel.

2. God always marked his covenant with man with holy signs and seals. When God made the promise of Jesus Christ 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, they had to kill animals to remember the picture of their salvation through substitution. When God entered into covenant with Abraham, God required circumcision. In circumcision the foreskin died, even as blood flowed over the organ through which seed would come, and the circumcised person became clean. You see signs after signs, but circumcision was codified.

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.**

Did the Bible make it clear that circumcision was a sign of being clean? Yes, even in the Old Testament.

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.

The sign of circumcision reflected what was in the hearts of the receiver or in the heart of the parents of the receiver.

3. Baptism is a sign and seal of forgiveness in Jesus Christ. You are the subject and God is the agent in Baptism. No man baptized you. God did. God confirms your faith by marking you.

a. **Baptism reminds you (it is a sign) that your sins have been washed away**, just as water washes away dirt from

the body.

b. Baptism reminds you that **you are the property of Jesus**, like a 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 is weak and wants to reassure him, remind him, and guarantee that he is the property of the Lord.

c. It is a command for you and your children to be **baptized**. We will deal with the children later.

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; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

4. The Lord Supper is a sign a seal of the work of Jesus Christ to save you. You are the receiver and Jesus Christ the giver.

a. The **bread and the wine symbolized (it is a sign of) 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.

b. The **bread and the wine are a seal that you belong to Jesus Christ and he is feeding you**.

For as surely as you eat the bread and drink the wine **you are assured that you are receiving his grace**, having been reconciled to God and received his forgiveness.

Hebrew 10:10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

c. **It is a command to eat** (Take eat, take drink – 1Corinthians 11:24-25) and to drink, for you show that you believe that Jesus died for your sins.

5. It wasn't enough to simply preach and win the lost. It wasn't enough to preach to the converted, as important as that was. The Lord demands that those who have heard the preached word **be baptized and **participate in the Lord's Table**.**

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, 20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

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.

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** 持续 **by the Holy Spirit through proper receiving of the Sacraments**—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. **Those who avoid these Holy Sacraments are sentenced to spiritual malnutrition** and eventually, spiritual death.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: While others are attached to beautiful buildings, big congregation, and influential preachers, **you must learn, love, and submit to the Word of God and his Holy Sacraments**. When you do, you will find full nourishment for your soul. Good spiritual food from the Word and Sacraments will make your faith stronger. But remember, you only have this promise because you are a child of God through Jesus Christ, who fully paid for all your sins.

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