

## LESSON 9

## Belgic Confession Articles 16 and 17 Election

### **General:**

In this lesson we examine the confession concerning God's eternal election (and reprobation) and note the manner in which this election is realized.

### **1. Election and Reprobation**

Election is "the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, out of the whole human race, which had fallen by its own fault out of its original integrity into sin and perdition, He has according to the sovereign good pleasure of His will, out of mere grace, chosen in Christ to salvation a definite number of persons . . . ." (Canons of Dort I, 7).

Ephesians 1:4, 5, "even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world . . . ."

Romans 8:30: "those whom He predestined, He also called . . . ."

#### *Predestination – Calling – Justification – Glorification*

The basis for this election is not our faith or works (Arminianism), but only God's sovereign grace and mercy.

Romans 9:16-18: "So it depends not on man's will or exertion, but on God's *mercy*."

There has been much debate about the exact *moment* or time when God made His decree of election. We may say that God's decree is "before the foundation of the world," and is realized in time after creation and fall.

Reprobation is God's just decision to leave certain persons "in the common misery into which they have by their own fault plunged themselves" (Canons of Dort I, 17). God leaves them in their sins, while they disobey the Word of God, rejecting Christ.

1 Peter 2:8: ". . . for they stumble because they disobey the Word, as they were destined to do . . . ."

We cannot accuse God of injustice in the matter of reprobation (see Romans 9:14), but we must all the more praise Him for His gracious election.

Those who are elected readily confess: It is because of God's *grace*. Those who are reprobated will admit: It is because of our *sins*.

### **2. The Manner of Election (Article 17; Canons of Dort 3-4)**

It is God Who in His grace seeks fallen man and proclaims to him the Gospel of redemption in Jesus Christ, Genesis 3:15.

In order that men may be brought to faith, God:

- a) sends out faithful preachers of the Gospel
- b) calls unto faith and repentance in Christ (Canons of Dort 13).  
See: Romans 10:14, 15.

It is therefore our *calling* to hear the Word of God faithfully and to be strengthened in our faith. It is further our calling to "confirm our call and election" and to be fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:8, 10).

The believers are by their faith and the fruits of faith *assured* of their election, although all their life they must struggle against their sins and weaknesses and sometimes can fall into great sin.

Since we believe that God's election is eternal and unchangeable, we also confess the *perseverance* of the saints (Canons of Dort V, Articles 9 and 10; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21, "I am and forever shall remain a living member of [Christ's Church]").

### **3. The Perseverance of the Saints**

This is of great comfort to the believers, for in all shortcomings, and trials they may be certain that God will not forsake them but will finish the work of salvation which He began for them.

The believers confess this perseverance and *pray* for it on the basis of God's promises:

Psalm 138:8: "The LORD will fulfil His purpose for me; Thy steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of Thy hands." (see also: Philippians 1:6)

### **QUESTIONS (Lesson 9):**

1. What is "election"?
2. Which Scripture passages clearly speak of this divine election?
3. What is the only basis for this election?
4. What is the teaching of *Arminianism* with respect to election?
5. What is "reprobation"?
6. May we accuse the Lord of injustice in reprobation?
7. How does God realize His sovereign decree of election?
8. What is our calling in this respect?
9. Can believers be assured of their election? How?
10. What do we mean by the perseverance of the saints?

### **ASSIGNMENT:**

Memory Work: Heidelberg Catechism, Questions and Answers 20, 54, 63 and 64.

## **ARTICLE 18**

### **THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD**

We confess, therefore, that God has fulfilled the promise He made to the fathers by the mouth of His holy prophets when, at the time appointed by Him, He sent into the world His own only-begotten and eternal Son, who took the form of a servant and was born in the likeness of men. He truly assumed a real human nature with all its infirmities, without sin, for He was conceived in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit and not by the act of a man. He not only assumed human nature as to the body, but also a true human soul, in order that He might be a real man. For since the soul was lost as well as the body, it was necessary that He should assume both to save both.

Contrary to the heresy of the Anabaptists, who deny that Christ assumed human flesh of His mother, we therefore confess that Christ partook of the flesh and blood of the children.

He is a fruit of the loins of David; born of the seed of David according to the flesh; a fruit of the womb of the virgin Mary; born of woman; a branch of David; a shoot from the stump of Jesse; sprung from the tribe of Judah; descended from the Jews according to the flesh; of the seed of Abraham, since the Son was concerned with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in every respect, yet without sin.

In this way He is in truth our Immanuel, that is, God with us.

## **ARTICLE 19**

### **THE TWO NATURES IN THE ONE PERSON OF CHRIST**

We believe that by this conception the person of the Son of God is inseparably united and joined with the human nature, so that there are not two sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person. Each nature retains its own distinct properties: His divine nature has always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life, filling heaven and earth. His human nature has not lost its properties; it has beginning of days and remains created. It is finite and retains all the properties of a true body. Even though, by His resurrection, He has given immortality to His human nature, He has not changed its reality, since our salvation and resurrection also depend on the reality of His body.

However, these two natures are so closely united in one person that they were not even separated by His death. Therefore, what He, when dying, committed into the hands of His Father was a real human spirit that departed from His body. Meanwhile His divinity always remained united with His human nature, even when He was lying in the grave. And the divine nature always remained in Him just as it was in Him when He was a little child, even though it did not manifest itself as such for a little while.

For this reason we profess Him to be true God and true man: true God in order to conquer death by His power; and true man that He might die for us according to the infirmity of His flesh.