 Name: _____

LESSON 09: REGENERATION

Memory work

Is God's work of regeneration comprehensible (understandable)?
No

How is faith a gift of God?
Not in the sense that God offers it to people, and people have to accept it.
But in the sense that God both offers it to people,
and confers faith on man, instilling and infusing it into him.

How should we react to the gift of faith?
Not with pride but with thankfulness.

Does God violate human nature when He has people believe?
No, man's nature is not replaced but renewed.

Since this work of God is done in a mysterious way, should we still use outward means to come to faith and strengthen our faith?
Yes, for the Holy Spirit not only works inwardly in the heart but also outwardly through the preaching and sacraments.

Homework

Read the article "Faith a gift of God" (back of this page). Complete the following sentence:

1) (2) *Everything that needs correction in man to have him believe is* _____.

The following questions may be tough, feel free to ask others for help.

I once read a website on how to be born again say, referring to Jeremiah 17:9 and Ezekiel 36:26-27 "God doesn't cure your sinful heart, He does a heart transplant and gives you a brand new righteous one."

2) (2) Is this what we would say (check Canons of Dort III/IV art. 11, 12 and 16)? _____

3) (3) Would it make sense for a person who has undergone this heart-transplant to still sin? _____

Why (not)? _____

_____

_____

_____

4) (3) How should *you* as a Reformed Christian explain the word "new" in Ezekiel 36:26-27?

_____

_____

_____

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 Name: _____

FAITH IS GOD'S GIFT – BUT HOW?

Human life is filled with things we do. What makes us do them? Do *we* do them? Does *God* do them? I just poured myself a coffee. Sat down, grabbed my phone, went to RO, and am now reading this. What got me here? Did I? Did God? The interplay of divine and human activity is puzzling.

For example, take the activity of faith. With Canons of Dort chapter III/IV article 14 the Reformed confess that faith is a gift of God "because it is actually conferred on man, instilled and infused into him." It is a gift in the sense that God "brings about in man both the will to believe and the act of believing." Does God do the believing? Or do I?

That faith is a gift of God is taught in Scripture. Note the following two texts.

Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." Regardless of whether "this" and "it" refer to "faith" or to "you-have-been-saved-by-faith", faith is here presented as a gift of God.

Philippians 1:29: "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him..." The fact that "to believe" has been "granted" indicates it is a gift.

That faith is a gift of God will be agreed to by any Bible-believing Christian. But *how* is it a gift? On that, convictions differ. To explain that I'll use the analogy of Jim giving Jenny chocolate.

Some claim that faith is a gift in that God "presents" faith to a person. A person will then have to choose by his own (free) will whether or not to believe. This is like Jim holding out the chocolates and looking for Jenny to accept them.

The problem is: after the fall into sin man's will is not free but totally corrupt. It only chooses evil. And man's actions are only evil. Jenny will never accept the chocolates. She does not want to. She never will as she cannot. She loathes chocolate. And she loathes Jim.

A variant on this view notes that God also has to empower a person to believe. Jim has to endear himself to Jenny. And he has to get her to like chocolate.

But still: man's will is not free. Even if Jim gets Jenny to like him and to like chocolate, she will never accept the chocolates. She will never want to. The will needs renewal.

The Reformed confess that God "confers" faith on man. Jim actually deposits the chocolate in Jenny's lap. If she doesn't want the chocolate, she'd have to give it back. Can man give faith back to God?

No, for God also "instills" faith into man. Jim actually takes the chocolate and puts it in Jenny's mouth. If she doesn't want the chocolate, she'll first have to remove it from her mouth. Theoretically still possible. But...

God even "infuses" faith into man. Jim actually makes Jenny chew the chocolate and swallow it. Give it back? Impossible. Indeed, God's faith-giving-grace is "invincible".

Everything that needs correction in man to have him believe is accomplished by God. The mind is enlightened. The heart is opened. The will is renewed. Faith is given. And then man believes.

Yes, man himself believes. God does not believe for man.

After all, no one will say that Jim ate the chocolate...