

To maintain the dogma of irresistible grace we must maintain that the Spirit comes into the soul before faith, and renews it in order that it may believe in Jesus. This is what Calvinists hold, as is evident from the Catechisms Larger and Shorter, and also the Westminster Confession of Faith. Now to teach regeneration before faith is to teach the sinner to look for an inward change before he looks to Jesus; it is to teach him to look to the Spirit, rather than to Jesus. It seems to us that if there be one thing taught more clearly than another in God's book, it is that regeneration is the fruit of faith, and not the precursor of faith.

It becomes us, however, to examine those passages of Scripture, which Calvinists point to as teaching their doctrine of regeneration before and in order to faith, by a direct, immediate and irresistible influence of the Spirit of God.

One of the most noted passages, appealed to by Calvinists, as supporting this doctrine is I Cor. ii. 14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." It is not contended that this passage directly teaches the doctrine of irresistible grace. It is argued that as the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit, he must be the subject of a change by the direct energy of the Spirit, before he can believe the Gospel.

Now to expound this passage and to show that it does not teach the doctrine referred to, notice, first, what is meant by the natural man. The word translated "natural" is twice rendered "sensual" in the New Testament. James iii, 15. "earthly, *sensual*, devilish." Jude, xi. "*Sensual* not having the Spirit." The natural man is the unconverted man under the influence of gross worldly desires. It means, "the animal man." Notice, secondly, what is meant by "*the things of the Spirit*." It is assumed by those who hold the dogma of irresistible grace that by "*the things of the Spirit*" is meant the Gospel, the rudimentary truths of religion, the milk of the word. But it must be evident to any one who carefully reads the whole chapter, and a few verses of the chapter succeeding, that the apostle is discoursing of the advanced truths of Christianity, the wisdom, which he spake among the perfect, mature Christians. (v. 6.) When he first preached in Corinth he determined to know nothing among the Corinthians, but Christ and him crucified, (v. 3.) He was accustomed, however, to speak wisdom among them that were perfect, i. e., mature in Christian knowledge and