

Canons of Dort–5: 14-15 – How to strengthen your assurance of your Salvation – Part 3

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

You need assurance of your salvation!

God tells you how he gives you assurance of your salvation.

He gives it to you by strengthening your faith, he gives it to you **by his Holy Spirit working in you**, and he gives it to you by **helping you to produce good works**.

God also tells you some things that might harm your assurance of your salvation.

You are **not to be lazy**, but work hard, and you are **not to flirt with sin**, but run from it.

Before we conclude this 5th Head of Doctrine, **hear how God strengthens your faith** so you can strengthen your assurance of your salvation.

Our headings today are:

Use the means of grace

Love and embrace this doctrine

Our goals are: **That knowing you are saved and secured for eternity through the eternal sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, you will act with confidence regardless of the challenges you face.**

Use the means of grace

Article 14: God's Use of Means in Perseverance - And as it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the **proclamation of the gospel**, so God preserves, continues, and completes the divine work by the hearing and reading of the gospel, by meditation on it, by its **exhortations, threats, and promises**, and also by the **use of the sacraments**.

1. God does not save you and then abandon you to fend for yourself; he is not that kind of a father.

He knows a man (who is really a spiritually immature child) will not survive a second without his constant help. So he provided the means by which his newborn child is nourished and given strength to get up when he falls down – and so be preserved.

Most people won't question a doctor who prescribes antibiotics for strep throat.

They go home and take the medicine – the full prescription – as the doctor directs. They are in pain and want the strep throat gone. They trust the doctor and believe the medicines will help, so they take it.

Similarly, Christians know God is their Father. They trust him. They receive internal and external confirmations of his love, of his promises, and of his ability to preserve them, so they take directions from their heavenly Father of what to do to receive that assurance of preservation. (God uses means!)

2. The 1st means of grace to nourish you so your faith is strong and you can be confident God will preserve you is the Bible.

Romans 10:17 So then **faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

a. God's Word gives you what you need to grow in grace and to have the strength to thrive.

Doesn't a mother give her baby the right food when he is born? Milk comes at the beginning and *then* pork chops and eggplant!

1Peter 2:2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,

You have seen the famous advertisement of the lady who has fallen and says: "I've fallen, and I can't get up."

But **every Christian is equipped with what he needs to get up when he falls,** and make it to the end of his life. God feeds you with good things.

This promise that if you feed on God's Word you will be preserved was taught long ago.

Deuteronomy 6:1 "Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, 2 **"that you may fear the LORD** your God, to keep all His statutes..."

God's Word is strength to your spiritual bones! You can get up and walk after eating it! You won't die of malnutrition.

God's Word is medicine to the sick. You are healed when you doubt or your faith is weakened. You won't worry!

God's Word is a comfort to those who are sad. You are encouraged when you are lonely or disappointed. Sadness brings on death. God wants to preserve your soul!

So his Word comforts you.

God's Word is a warning to those who are wayward. It will strike you on the back. **If you resist the warnings you will wander into dangerous places.** (“Quicksand, Keep Out?”)

God wants to keep you in the straight path to preserve you.

(Arminians argue if God preserves his children and assures them of his preservation, then God would not give his children any warnings, as there would be no need for them.

But that is not true. God **uses means to preserve his children** and he gives them many warnings, including to “make their calling and election sure.” In Hebrews 6, the Lord warned against apostasy.

So always keep a serious look on yourselves. Receive warnings to flee to the throne of grace for help.

b. So know all 66 books of the Bible, not only in your head but also in your heart. Study the law, prophets, Psalms, Gospels, and Epistles. Stay away from churches and pastors that focus on the NT only. Otherwise, your soul will only get part nourishment. Don't be malnourished.

They are denying you 2/3 of the Gospel! All of the Bible speaks of Christ...

All of these books reassure you you are his! And they must preach this diligently.

2Timothy 4:2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

c. Feast on God's Word daily in your homes – feast on Christ - to get the reassurance of your salvation. You need more than a few meals. That is not sufficient to grow.

You need constant helpings of nutritious words – and twice on Sundays.

Deuteronomy 6:6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 "You shall teach them diligently to your children...

Take the time to read the Bible and talk about it. Don't ritually read it and put it away. After reading, leave your children something to remember...some good nugget to feed on – to think about.

d. Privately meditate on the words of Scripture, like Mary pondered what she heard from the angel in Luke 2:19. Mary would have been worried about her “out of wedlock” pregnancy, but the words of the angels made her bold!

Psalm 119:97 Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

Take advantage of your quiet times with the Lord...early in the morning...late at night...or when the kids are in school.

Children, you must be doing this as well...and do it before you are tired.

Adults, **marry someone who loves the Word of God!**

Ask a potential spouse about his devotional life. Look at it!

3. The 2nd means of grace are the sacraments -Baptism and the Lord's Supper - which strengthen the assurance of your salvation.

Both give the same message as the Word.

Both draw your mind back to the cross and Christ satisfying God's anger against you.

Both strengthen your faith and assure you you are the Lord's forever.

a. Whenever you witness a baptism, think of the cross and see the drops of blood flowing down Jesus' face and side to make you clean. Think how that blood separated you from the world and joined you to the Savior.

Once that leaves a mark on your soul...not just on your body...you will know you are his for eternity. The Spirit of God seals you! You will be confident you are precious in God's sight and preserved for all eternity.

b. Whenever you eat the bread and drink the wine of the Lord's Supper, think how Jesus satisfied his Father's anger for you and is able to nourish you with what is good. Receiving that truth is food for your soul!

This nourishment from the Lord gives you the assurance you are his...and he will always preserve you! After all, he is always feeding you!

Love and embrace this doctrine

Article 15: Contrasting Reactions to the Teaching of Perseverance - This teaching about the perseverance of true believers and saints, and about their assurance of it—a teaching which God has very richly revealed in the Word for the glory of God’s name and for the comfort of the godly and which the Almighty impresses on the hearts of believers—is something which **the flesh does not understand, Satan hates, the world ridicules**, the ignorant and the hypocrites abuse, and the spirits of error attack. The **bride of Christ, on the other hand, has always loved this teaching very tenderly and defended it** steadfastly as a priceless treasure; and God, against whom no plan can avail and no strength can prevail, will ensure that the church will continue to do this. To this God alone, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

1. God gave this doctrine of assurance for the comfort of the godly...

a. ...but some don’t understand assurance and so rob themselves of its benefits.

This is what the Devil would like to do – steal that comfort by stopping them from studying the Word of God.

b. ...but the world mocks God’s assurance and preservation of his saints because assurance and preservation **take away human agency** and **makes God preeminent.**

The world sees god-ness in man. This was why communists wanted people to live in communes, thinking life would become perfect—a utopia.

Man isn’t god! Man is intrinsically selfish.

c. ...but some abuse the doctrine of the preservation of the saints. Arminians teach this doctrine will make man complacent. It doesn’t and it can’t, as you saw last time.

Hypocrites use it as an excuse to live indulgently....Christians won’t!

2. So how does this doctrine comfort the godly and give him that assurance?

The HC Q&A 1, expresses this comfort more clearly than I ever could.

That I am not my own, but belong— body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven...

3. Embracing this doctrine will *make you pray for faith to increase the assurance of your preservation.*

The greater your assurance of faith, the more effective you will be for the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

4. Embracing this doctrine will *make you praise God for your preservation and he deserves all praise for he did it all!*

Conclusion:

Christians, saved by Jesus' work on the cross, and sealed by the Holy Spirit, are genuinely the Lord's possession forever! What joy!

But sadly, you *can* forget this message in tough times – maybe when you are sick, or involved in a divorce, or betrayed by a loved one.

So you must reinforce in your heart you are the Lord's and are preserved for eternity by **getting into the Word of God and meditating on the work of the Savior for you, and nourishing yourself on his Sacraments.**

And then love and embrace this doctrine so you can receive its benefits. Doing this will increase your faith and make you live without fear or uncertainty.

Beloved in the Lord:

1. Christ assurance of your eternal salvation makes you *love God more.*

You couldn't save yourself.

You couldn't preserve yourself even if you were saved.

The Lord did both for you.

Love him for it.

2. Since God assures you of his salvation by the means of grace, *cherish the preaching of the Word and participating in the sacraments.*

These will strengthen your faith.

3. Prepare your children from youth to learn to listen to the Word of God.

Talk to them of the meaning of the sacraments.

These will **lead them to and keep them in Christ**, give them assurance, and drive away their fears.

4. Tell others about it...that Jesus loved sinners and gave his life for them.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, you are faithless! But faith is a gift of God...a gift that he offers to anyone who will call on him and ask him for it. It is a free gift to you, but it

didn't come free. It came through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross who fully paid for it. By faith you receive what Jesus did on the cross!