

Canons of Dort–5:9-12 – Assurance of Salvation: Your Personal Experience

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: We now go back to the main teaching about the preservation of the saints (圣徒永蒙保守, 或称圣徒之坚忍) after dealing with the issue of those who backslide. You will hear about the believer's personal experience with this precious doctrine.

Our headings are:

How do you experience Assurance of Salvation (得救的确据)

Will you have doubts about your Assurance of Salvation

Does your assurance of salvation make you lazy

Our goals are: That because God preserves you as a Christian, even though you fall into sin from time to time, you will love and serve him better.

How Do you Experience Assurance of Salvation?

Article 9: The Assurance of This Preservation - Concerning this preservation of those chosen to salvation and concerning the perseverance of true believers in faith, believers themselves can and do **become assured in accordance with the measure of their faith**. By **this faith they firmly believe** that they are and always will remain true and living members of the church, and that they have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

第九条 信徒确信蒙保守——信徒自己能够对选民蒙保守得救恩和真信徒能持守信仰有十足的把握。照着神赐的信心的程度, 信徒也确实对上述两点有把握, 他们都坚信自己现在是, 并且永远是真信徒, 是教会里活泼的一员, 也坚信自己得了赦罪之恩和永生。

Article 10: The Ground of This Assurance - Accordingly, **this assurance does not derive from some private revelation beyond or outside the Word**, but from faith in the promises of God which are very plentifully revealed in the Word for our comfort, from the testimony of **“that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God**, and if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,” and finally from a serious and **holy pursuit of a clear conscience and of good works**. Moreover, if God's chosen ones in this world did not have this well-founded comfort that the victory will be theirs and this reliable guarantee of eternal glory, they would be of all people most miserable.

第十条 此确信的来源——这确信不是来源于圣经以外的某个“给个人的启示”, 而是来源于: (一) 信神的应许, 这应许是神为了让我们得安慰而在祂话语中丰富地启示给我们的; (二) 圣灵与我们的同心作见证, 证明我们是神的儿女和后嗣 1; (三) 为神的缘故认真地追求清洁的良心 2, 行真正的善事。如果神的选民在今生没有从最后得胜的盼望中得到实在的安慰 3, 也没有永远得荣耀的可靠保证, 他们就比众人更可怜 4。

1. Arminians (阿民念主义) argue that no one can have or experience assurance of salvation unless it is revealed to him by special revelation (prophecies, a dream, someone telling them, or opening up their Bibles randomly to a certain passage, etc). In doing this they mime 模仿 what the Roman Catholic popes taught. But Romanists go one step farther. The Council of Trent (特伦托会议), a Roman Catholic Council, issued a curse upon anyone who said he could be sure he was saved— even if he had special revelation. (There are many similarities between Roman Catholicism and Arminians.)

As Reformed Christians, we argue that we do have special revelation (特殊启示); we have the perfected, completed Revelation (2Timothy 3:16-17). And by faith we believe what the Bible reveals: That you can be assured you are saved forever if you are God's child and you can experience that comforting assurance in your life. God promised it and you receive it. His Word is trustworthy! So you don't have to go to a necromancer (亡灵巫师) to ask about your dead relatives if they were saved or not. You don't have to wait for a dream. Look at God's promises in his Word.

John 10:28 "And I give them eternal life, and **they shall never perish**; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

Romans 8:39 **nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate** us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. If you don't feel the assurance (some people don't), it doesn't mean that it is not there. It is there. You have to grab hold of it! Look how Apostle Paul grabbed hold of this certainty!

2Timothy 4: 7 I have **fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith**. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. ^[18] And the **Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom**...

Does he appear to have any doubt? No. Neither should you. This is the teaching of God's Word. Look again:

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that **He who has begun a good work in you will complete it** until the day of Jesus Christ;

Bowman: "I am not left hoping for something I may not get. God has made me rich beyond compare because today I know with certainty where I shall be tomorrow: with Him."

3. So if this assurance is there, how can you feel and truly enjoy this assurance?

a. Strengthen your faith. The stronger your faith (which comes through the Word), the stronger will be your assurance! But if you aren't regularly in God's Word your faith will be weak and you will doubt.

Ephesians 4:12 for the **equipping of the saints for the work of ministry**, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, **tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men**, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— (12为要成全圣徒，各尽其职，建立基督的身体；13直等到我们众人在真道上同归于一，认识神的儿子，得以长大成人，满有基督长成的身量；14使我们不再作小孩子，中了人的诡计，和欺骗的法术，被一切异教之风摇动，飘来飘去，就随从各样的异端；15惟用爱心说诚实话，凡事长进，连于元首基督；

If you want your children to live in fear and doubt their salvation, **don't build them up in the Word**. They will be weak adults. But I know you want better. Put more time in things that count. Drop some of the lesser activities so they can focus on their soul.

b. Let the Holy Spirit work in you, through the Word, to confirm your assurance and strengthen your faith.

Romans 8: 14...as are **led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God**. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

When the Holy Spirit works in you, you'll call God, "Daddy." An adopted child takes a while, but adapts to his new parents as he knows them. So the more you know your Father, the more you trust him. He convinces you that you are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus. This is why **you must pray for the Holy Spirit** to work in you as you read the Bible...or listen to sermons.

c. Produce good works. They will help to give you the assurance that you are right with God and have faith.

Galatians 5: 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

If the Spirit is in you, you will bear good fruits. Those are the literal words of Jesus.

Matthew 12:33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.

Will you have doubts about your Assurance of Salvation?

Article 11: Doubts Concerning This Assurance - Meanwhile, Scripture testifies that believers have to **contend in this life with various doubts of the flesh**, and that under severe temptation they do not always experience this full assurance of faith and certainty of perseverance. **But the Source of all comfort, "will not let you be tested beyond your strength**, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it," and by the Holy Spirit revives in them the assurance of their perseverance.

第十一条 此确信不总能感受到——同时，圣经也作见证：信徒在今生不得不与肉体的各种怀疑争战；在遭受巨大试探时，他们并不总能感觉到这样的确信，也不总认为自己肯定能持守这信仰。然而，赐各样安慰的父神 1，必不叫他们受试探过于他们所能受的，在受试探的时候，总要给他们开一条出路；他也必藉着圣灵，使信徒再次确信自己能持守这信仰 2。

1. It is realistic to expect that you may sometimes doubt your salvation. King David doubted his salvation. In Psalm 13, he wondered where God was, as if he lost his union with God.

Psalm 13:1 A Psalm of David. How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?

Asaph, another good Christian leader that I have often referenced from Psalm 73, who worked in the temple regularly, talked stumbling in his faith. The thought that the wicked prospered and were healthy was too much for him. And he wondered where God was. He thought his good living was useless.

Psalm 73:2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. **[13]** Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence.

(2 至于我，我的脚几乎失闪，我的脚险些滑跌。13 我实在徒然洁净了我的心，徒然洗手表明无辜。)

And there are many examples. The Apostle Paul couldn't do the things he wanted to do and he could only do the things he didn't want to?

2. Even though you doubt, God will not allow you to be destroyed. He keeps you from falling off the cliff. He always stops destruction from overwhelming you. This is why Satan acknowledged to God that God put a hedge around Job and he couldn't touch him, though he wanted to.

1Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

3. The Arminians argue that doubting is "praiseworthy." But they argue this for a sinister (险恶的) reason. They use this argument to push people to fear. Instead of preaching the glorious work of Christ for sinners as the true motivation for

good works, they want you to do so from fear. But doubting is sinful. You have no basis for doubts. You have a basis for confident approach to God.

Hebrews 10:19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

So do not come to God with fear, trepidation (惶恐), and doubts. No, come with confidence and comfort.

Does your Assurance of Salvation make you lazy?

Article 12: This Assurance as an Incentive to Godliness - This assurance of perseverance, however, so far from making true believers proud and carnally secure, is rather the true root of humility, of childlike respect, of genuine godliness, of endurance in every conflict, of fervent prayers, of steadfastness in crossbearing and in confessing the truth, and of well-founded joy in God. Reflecting on this benefit provides an incentive to a serious and continual practice of thanksgiving and good works, as is evident from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

第十二条 此确信是追求圣洁的动力——对持守信仰有把握绝不会使真信徒骄傲自满, 相反, 它能生出谦卑、对神孩童般的敬畏¹ 和真敬虔, 也会使信徒在每一次争战中忍耐, 热切祷告, 在患难中坚定不移, 坚持宣告真理, 并在神里面常常喜乐²。此外, 思想持守信仰所带来的益处也激励信徒不断真心地感恩并行善³, 这一点从圣经的见证与圣徒的例子中都得到了证明。

1. The Arminians argue against assurance of salvation because they think it will make Christians falsely secure and

complacent (自满的). They believe that a Christian who is saved will say: “If I am going to heaven, why bother to live godly?” But the fact that you are assured of your salvation does not and must not make you boastful!

2. On the contrary, the fact that you are assured of your salvation makes you humble, respectful, godly, patient in conflict, pray, steadfast, speak the truth, have deep joy in the Lord. So take time to reflect on these things. If you are drawing from the vine you will produce what comes from the vine. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit. Consider 3 evidences.

a. You will produce works worthy of your new life. (Galatians 5)

John 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. **He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit;** for without Me you can do nothing.

Titus 2:14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for **Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.**

b. You will work to purify yourself of your sins. The one who is careless about anything that God says and refuses to produce good works evidences an unconverted heart.

1John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And **everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself,** just as He is pure.

c. You will worship! True worship is evidence of true humility. Worship is making yourself totally under submission to one greater than you! It is against the human nature to worship the true God.

Psalms 116:12 **What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me?** ¹³ I will take up the cup of salvation, And **call upon the name of the LORD.** (12 我拿什么报答耶和華向我所賜的一切厚恩? 13 我要举起救恩的杯, 称扬耶和華的名。)

“Take up the cup of salvation” is a picture of giving thanks (worship), like the head of a household did before a meal.

Conclusion:

You experience your salvation when you grab hold of God’s promises by faith, when the Holy Spirit works through the Word in your heart, and when you do good works with the right motive. It is true that sometimes you might doubt your salvation, but God will never allow you to be destroyed. He will always bring you out...by using his Word, maybe through a preacher or through your own personal study of his Word. And this assurance of salvation increases your ability and desire to do good works.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: I assume you have the knowledge of the assurance of your salvation. Are you enjoying it? If not, get back into God’s love letter. Pray for the Holy Spirit to work in you. Submit to doing truly good works. This will help you to know you are saved! But let’s say that you become weak and start to doubt your assurance, don’t despair. Follow God’s prescription. Jesus not only died for your regeneration (重生), he also died for your sanctification (成圣).

Finally: If you are not a Christian, what assurance do you have? You are assured that you will spend eternity in hell with no hope of redemption (救贖). But before you go there, you have the opportunity to change your destiny. You can change your destiny if you call upon God to make you his child and remove your sins on account of the fact that Jesus died for sinners.