

Canons of Dort–5th Head: 14-15 – How to strengthen your assurance of your Preservation – 3

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: 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!)

Today you will hear of **the final 2 things Christians must do to strengthen their assurance of their preservation in Jesus Christ**.

Our headings are:

Assured Christians will want to use the means of grace to be preserved

Assured Christians will love and embrace this doctrine of preservation

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**.

Assured Christians will want to use the means of grace to be preserved

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 a person and then abandons him to fend for himself; 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 God provided the means by which his newborn child is nourished in his soul and be given strength to get up when he falls down – and so be preserved.

There are 2 ways that he **provided for a child's soul in the world** – **things his child must use!** Means!!!

2. The 1st means of grace to nourish a child so his faith is strong and he can be confident God will preserve him is the Word of God.

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

a. God gives him what he needs 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 later!

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

Surely you have seen the famous advertisement of the lady who has fallen and she 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 all the way 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 wither and die of malnutrition.

God's Word is medicine to the sick. You are healed when you doubt or your faith is weakened. When you feel better you can live and not 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. Don't only hold on to the promises and forget the warnings! **If you resist the warnings you will wander into dangerous places.** (Ever seen the sign "Quicksand, Keep Out?" God wants to keep you in the straight path to preserve you. (Arminians argue that 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. **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 believers have to always keep a serious look on themselves.** And believers who receive warnings flee to the throne of grace for help.

b. You must know all 66 books of the Bible, not only in your head but also in your heart. This means you must 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. That is spiritual malnourishment. **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. Bowman: "...not just have a few meals. That is not sufficient to grow. **You need constant helpings of nutritious words.**"

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 with something to remember...some good nugget to feed on – to think about.

e. 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!

Psalms 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. (Don't put down your Bible when you get home and pick it up next week to come back to church!) **Children, you must be doing this as well...and do it before you are tired.** Adults, marry someone who loves the Word of God! You will need that Word in your life when you have doubts!

3. The 2nd means of grace is the sacraments.

There are 2 sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper. 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 are intended to strengthen your faith and assure you that you are the Lord's forever.

a. Whenever you witness a baptism, draw your mind back to 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 that 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, you will think of 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!

Assured Christians Will love and embrace this doctrine of Preservation

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 the benefits of it.

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 preminent**. The world sees god-ness in man. This was why communists wanted people to live in communes, thinking life would become perfect—a utopia. They plainly rejected the truth of God as revealed in his Word and assume the god-ness of man.

c. But some abuse it. Arminians teach that 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. They don’t understand the Gospel.

2. So how does this doctrine comfort the godly?

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 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!

He deserves the praise. He did it all!

Conclusion:

Christians, saved by Jesus' work on the cross, and sealed by the Holy Spirit, are genuinely the Lord's forever! What joy! **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 you are the Lord's and 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**. Do this and live without fear or uncertainty.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ, a few personal questions to close:

1. Doesn't Christ assurance of your eternal salvation make 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 using the means of grace, do you cherish the preaching of the Word and participating in the sacraments? You should!

3. Are you preparing your children from youth to learn to listen to the Word of God? You should. Do you talk to them of the meaning of the sacraments? You should! These will lead them to and keep them in Christ, give them assurance, and drive away their fears.

4. Wouldn't you want to 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.