

2 Cor. 1:19-20 (WCF 18:1-2) "Established, Anointed, Sealed and Pledged"

For the Children: How do you know that you are truly a child of your parents? Probably because they told you. If you trust them, there is no reason to doubt it. Perhaps, as you grow older, you will see more and more likeness to your father or mother. That is also good evidence, though the main assurance comes from what they tell you. So it is with knowing that we are God's children. As we see ourselves becoming more godly in the way we live, that will give us some encouragement. But the main proof comes from our Father in heaven. He tells us in His word; He tells us what His Son has done so we can be God's adopted children; and He sends His Spirit to enable us to believe these truths. **Questions:** What is "assurance"? How does looking to Jesus help us have assurance? How does the Holy Spirit help us with assurance?

Introduction:

First Point: Assurance from the Word

- 1) Yes and No: The apostle and his co-workers were accused of being two-faced – saying yes and no at the same time. But they were busy preaching and teaching the Word of God. It would be a serious matter indeed to make the Word seem untrustworthy.
- 2) The Promises of God: In v.20 the apostle makes it clear that they are preaching the promises of God. Those promises are not ambiguous or contradictory. They are "yes." We can say "Amen" to them, meaning that they are faithful, true and reliable. If this were not so, we would have no assurance of the existence of God or the promise of salvation. But the Lord is the God of truth, sovereign and immutable. He always keeps His Word and can never be thwarted.
- 3) Objective Assurance: God's promises assure us that He will certainly save His people. Consider 1 John.5:12, John.5:24, John. 10:29, Rom.8:1. These are covenant-promises, sworn by God in His own Name. See WCF 18:2. This is the objective basis for our certainty of salvation – an assurance that comes from outside of us and which does not go up and down.

Second Point: Assurance from the Son

- 1) Promises That Are "Yes" in Christ: Neither Christ Himself nor the promises that are "in Him" are "yes and no" – they are simply "yes" (vss.19-20). That is because He is the same sovereign, immutable God of truth. He is also the ground of all the promises of salvation. They are fulfilled in Him. There is no doubt about that. His work for us cannot be undone. He, too, gives us "objective assurance."
- 2) Fixing Our Eyes on Him: For that reason, assurance comes from "fixing our eyes upon the Author and Perfecter of faith" (Heb.12:2). Faith enables us to know and trust Him, to be committed to Him and to be assured that we belong to Him.
- 3) Seeing Ourselves in Him: WCF 18:2 speaks of looking at the evidence of graces within us. But we must know that we are in Christ before we can say that our works are good. First we must look to Christ, then view our works in light of our relationship with Him. He gives the primary assurance; our works are secondary evidences.

Third Point: Assurance from the Spirit

- 1) Triune Assurance: God "establishes us" (v.21) – makes us firm and stable. He has done so "in Christ," in whom the promises are "yes and Amen." He has anointed and sealed us with His Spirit. He has also given us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge – a deposit that guarantees that the rest is to follow. To seal, here, is to give a guarantee of authenticity, and security. The language here also implies that these things have been done once-and-for-all. The Spirit does this by granting the new birth, giving the gift of faith sanctifying us and giving us a spirit of adoption. Through His work, we are able to trust the promises, look to Christ, see ourselves as God's sons and daughters and see evidences of God's work within us. That is how He enables us to lay hold of the objective assurances of salvation.
- 2) False Claimants: Though hypocrites wrongly claim this assurance, true believers are enabled to respond rightly to the certain hope that is set before us. The Spirit enables us to overcome the doubts that may assail us when we wonder if we might be fooling ourselves.

Conclusion: