

1998 Summer Lecture Series (Carson City)
An Introduction to the Reformed Faith
The Assurance of Grace: Assurance in the Life of the Saints (#12)

I. The Issue of Assurance: Who Has Done What?

In the age of easy-believism, assurance of salvation is easy. A pretty generic definition of assurance is the personal confidence that one has experienced the new birth, has genuine faith in Christ, is in a state of saving grace and will enjoy eternal life.

As long as the gospel is man-centered, and as long as man's will is the determining factor in his faith, then the assurance of salvation is nothing more than confidence that I have done the right thing.

However, if salvation is of the Lord, if it is God who chooses, God who redeems, God who calls and justifies, and God who sanctifies and preserves, then the question of assurance cannot easily be answered on the basis of whether or not I have done something; but must be answered on the basis of whether or not God has done something. There is all the difference in the world in having confidence of being in a state of grace because of your decision or because of the work of God.

II. The Definition of Assurance
WCF, XVIII

III. The duty of attaining assurance

- A. We are people who are easily self-deceived (Jer. 17:9; 1 Cor. 6:9; Jas. 1:22).
- B. It is possible to be one who calls Jesus "Lord" and yet be lost (Matt. 7:21-23). It is possible to a branch which does not have the life of the branch in it and therefore dead (John 15:1-6). It is possible to have an empty faith (1 Cor. 15:1-2), a dead faith (Jas. 2:14-26), and an evil heart of unbelief (Heb. 3:12-14). This is the category of the false professor.
- C. We are commanded to have a firm assurance of faith (Heb. 6:11-12; 10:22).
- D. We are commanded to examine ourselves and our profession of faith (2 Cor. 13:5; 2 Pet. 1:10).

IV. The Doctrine of Assurance (three aspects, WCF, 18.2)
milking stool

A. The Biblical Objective Leg of Assurance

*We have come to understand the Gospel (sin, inability, grace, Christ, faith, repentance; Eph. 2:1-10), and

*We have complied with the duties of the gospel to repent of our sin and self-reliance and embrace Christ by faith alone (John 3:16, 36; Acts 16:31; 17:30; Eph. 2:8-9).

*On the objective testimony of the Word of God regarding Christ, His gospel and the demands, we embrace the Person of Christ and these truths objectively, resting in the promises given.

B. The Experiential-Objective Leg of Assurance

The grace of God through Christ changes us (union with Christ, regeneration and conversion) the result being the marks of operative grace (Rom. 6:1-23; 2 Cor. 5:21; Titus 2:13).

1 John 5:12; cf. 1:6-10 (walking in light/darkness; confessing/lying); 2:3, 5-6 (obedience); 2:17-17 (not loving the world, doing the will of the Father); 2:19 remaining in the community of faith; 3:6-10 (not practicing sin, practicing righteousness); 3:14; 4:7-8, 16 (loving the brethren); 4:15 (confessing Jesus is the Son of God).

C. The Experiential-Subjective Leg of Assurance: The Inner Witness of the Holy Spirit

An Exposition of Romans 8:12-16

1. The Christian Paradox: Live in the flesh and you will die, Kill the flesh and you will live (12-13)
2. The Spirit's Leading: To Kill the Deeds of the Flesh (14)
(To be led by the Spirit to put to death the deeds of the flesh is a mark that one is a son of God)
3. The Spirit's Confirmation: Spirit led people are those who have received the Spirit of adoption (15)
4. The Spirit's Witness: To be led by the Spirit, and to cry out "Abba Father" by the Spirit, is to have the Spirit witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (16)

V. Full Assurance in the Life of the Saint

- A. It is to be desired and sought after (Tho. Brooks)
God wants His true children to have a genuine assurance of grace. But He wants us to have a firm assurance, grounded in redemptive reality.
- B. It can be lost, weakened, etc. (WCF)
- C. It is necessary for a comfortable walk with God
- D. In order for it to be truly profitable, it must real assurance, based on real and biblical means.
The tragedy in our day is that so many have a false assurance, a false hope, which is grounded not in the power of sovereign grace through Jesus Christ, but in their own efforts.

May God grant each of His elect true assurance of grace.