

Canons 5:9-11—How to strengthen your assurance of your Preservation 1

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: We have already established that **God elects, calls, justifies, sanctifies, and preserves every Christian**. That golden chain of salvation can never be broken! And we have also established **that God uses “means” to do these things**. For instance, God **calls the elect through the preaching** of the Word of God and God sent **his Son to suffer for your sins so he could justify you!**

Today you will see how God works out preservation (the means he uses) in the lives of believers.

Our headings are:

How to increase your assurance of your Preservation

How to deal with doubts about the Assurance of your Preservation

Our goals are: **That you will make use of the means God has provided to give you assurance so you can confidently go forward in your life and serve your Redeemer.**

How to increase your assurance of your Preservation

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.

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**.

1. Before we consider how to increase your assurance of salvation, let us first consider how Arminians, Roman Catholics, and Reformed Christians view the preservation of the saints.

This will make you appreciate more the work of the Lord of preserving you and assuring you of your salvation.

a. Arminians: Arminians and some Baptists argue that no one can have or experience assurance of salvation **unless that assurance is revealed to him by special revelation** (prophecies, a dream, someone who was inspired by God telling them so, or opening up

their Bibles randomly to a certain passage, etc).

b. Roman Catholics: Rome goes one step farther than Arminians. The Council of Trent (1545ff), 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.)

c. Reformed Christians argue that we do have special revelation; we have the perfected, completed Revelation (2Timothy 3:16-17). And by faith we believe what the Bible reveals. It says you can be assured you are saved forever and you can experience that comforting assurance of your preservation in your life and throughout your life. The Holy Spirit works through God's Word to give you that assurance.

God promised it and you received it. His Word is trustworthy! Don't go to a necromancer to ask about your dead relatives if they were saved or not. Don't wait for a dream. Look at God's promises!

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 of your preservation (some people don't), it doesn't mean it is not there.

It is there. You have to grab hold of it! 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 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;

3. So how do you receive this assurance of your preservation that God gives?

a. Strengthen your faith. The stronger your faith, the stronger your assurance! But if you aren't regularly in God's Word your faith will be weak and you will doubt you are preserved, especially when you stray a little.

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...

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 for your children. Put more time in things that count. **Drop some of the lesser activities in your children's lives** so you can focus on their soul. Do the same thing for your spouse!

Good activities can become bad activities if they rob you of better activities.

b. Let the Holy Spirit work in you, through the Word, to strengthen your faith, and so assure you of your salvation. This means "submission."

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...

An adopted child takes a while but adapts to his new parents as he gets to know 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 when you listen to sermons...or when you read good Christian books...

c. Produce good works. They will help to give you the assurance you are secured in your salvation!

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.**

Worship the Lord – in your heart, in your home, and in his house. Encourage weaker brothers. Visit the sick. Speak for the persecuted. Share the Gospel. Pray. Challenge wicked leaders. Defend the weak!

How to deal with doubts about the Assurance of your Preservation

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.

1. It is not uncommon to sometimes doubt your salvation, even as King David doubted his salvation.

In Psalm 13, David wondered where God was, as if he lost his union with God.

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

Asaph who worked in the temple, talked about 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. Even though you doubt you are saved, God will not allow you to be destroyed.

He keeps you from falling off the cliff. He 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. Our Arminian Friends argue that doubting your salvation is “praiseworthy.”

But they argue this for a sinister 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 good works from fear.

But doubting your salvation is sinful. You have no basis for doubts. You have a basis for confident approach to God. You know you are his and that assurance in your heart makes you bold!

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...

So do not come to God with fear, trepidation, and doubts but with confidence and comfort. Your sins are gone and God will never want to, nor indeed will he, hold any sin against you.

Conclusion:

You experience your assurance of salvation and your preservation when the Holy Spirit works through the Word in your heart. **It is true that sometimes you might doubt you are the Lord's,** 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, or through a podcast. **And this assurance of salvation increases your ability and desire to do good works...**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Having the assurance of your preservation, are you enjoying it? If you are not enjoying your eternal security, get back into God's love letter. Pray for the Holy Spirit to work in you. Submit to doing truly good works. These things will help you to know you are saved forever and restore the joy you ought to have!

2. If you still don't have this assurance of preservation and the joy of Jesus, ask yourself if you truly know Jesus – if you truly believe he lived and died for you. This may be the problem. If it is the problem, then ask him to work in you and help you to receive his work.

3. Help our Arminian friends who don't enjoy the assurance of their preservation to know it is available to enjoy! Open up the Word to them. Read the Gospel of John with them! It is full of assurances of the preservation of the saints!

Finally: If you are not a Christian, you too have assurances! You are assured you will spend eternity in hell with no hope of redemption. 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. You can be 100% assured God will listen.