

Assurance and Perseverance

I. The Spirit gives us assurance of salvation

- How can we know for sure if we are saved?
 - The Holy Spirit assures us of God's love. He is the comforter, after all!
 - Rom 8:16–17: “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs ...”
 - Gal 5:5: “For *through the Spirit*, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.”
- The Spirit is himself our assurance. Having the Spirit is the great pointer that we will certainly be saved.
 - He is God's love: Rom 5:5: “... hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”
 - He is God's solemn seal of his intention to save: Eph 1:13: “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit” (also 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 4:30).
 - He is God's guarantee: 2 Cor 1:22: “[God] has given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” (also 2 Cor 5:5; Eph 1:14)
 - He is the firstfruits of our salvation (Rom 8:23): the same kind of blessing we will have in the future (namely, the Spirit) is ours now (Ferguson).
- Helpful signs that the Holy Spirit uses to encourage us:
 - Our increased love for God and for one another:
 - 1 John 4:12–13: “if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.” (see 1 John 3:24)
 - Our suffering:
 - 1 Pet 4:14: “If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”
 - Even our struggle with sin is a sign of God's grace in us!
- There is such a thing as false assurance (Matt 7:23). But our assurance can be absolutely certain. WCF 18.2 “[Our] certainty [of salvation] is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith, founded upon:
 - [1] the divine truth of the promises of salvation
 - [2] the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made,
 - [3] the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God: which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.”
- Our experience of assurance can wax and wane.
 - Lots of things can cause us to lose assurance for a time (WCF 18.4):
 - Negligence of the means of grace.
 - Pursuit of some sin without repentance.
 - Severe temptation.
 - Psychological disorders.
 - “God's withdrawing the light of His countenance, and suffering even such as fear Him to walk in darkness, and to have no light.”

- A true believer may lack assurance and need to wait for it a long time, going through many struggles in the meantime (WCF 18.3).
- “[Yet true believers] are never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may, in due time, be revived; and by the which, in the mean time, they are supported from utter despair” (WCF 18.4).

II. The Spirit enables us to persevere in faith to the end

- The temptation: to try to finish in our own strength.
 - Gal 3:3: “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”
- We need the Spirit to make it to the end! The Spirit brings us through trials that seem unbearably difficult.
 - Phil 1:19: “I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance ...”
 - He can help us resist temptations that would be too strong for us: Jude 24: “Now *to him who is able to keep you from stumbling* and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy ...”
- The Spirit will enable us to persevere: God will finish his saving work!
 - Phil 1:6: “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”
 - John 10:28 “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.” (cf. 1 Pet 1:5)
 - WCF 17.2: “This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but
 - [1] upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father;
 - [2] upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ;
 - [3] the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them;
 - [4] and the nature of the covenant of grace:
 - from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.”
- In the end, just as Jesus’ resurrection was by the Spirit, so also will ours be:
 - Rom 8:11: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”
 - Our blessed hope is to be fully clothed with the Spirit even as Jesus himself is (1 Cor 15:42–49; Phil 3:21).
- Conclusion: WCF 17.1: “They, whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.”