

“The Difficulty of Assurance” □ WCF 18.3k (TPH p930)

2024.06.23 Sabbath School Lesson

Hopewell ARPC, Culleoka, TN

1. Although hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God, and estate of salvation (which hope of theirs shall perish): yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love Him in sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before Him, may, in this life, be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.

2. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, 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.

3. This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be partaker of it: yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto. And therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance; so far is it from inclining men to looseness.

4. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of His countenance, and suffering even such as fear Him to walk in darkness and to have no light: yet are they 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 meantime, they are supported from utter despair.

k. 1John 5:12–13 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

- Assurance is, most of all, assurance that you have the Son of God.
- There are those who are sure about Him (they “believe in the Name of the Son of God”) but are not sure about themselves having Him (they still need to “know that you have eternal life”).
- This assurance is most useful, when gained, because it is appointed by God for sustaining perseverance (“that you may continue to believe”)

l. 1Corinthians 2:8–13 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who

love Him.” 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

- The knowledge of redemption accomplished (v8–9) and of redemption applied (v10) is a work in us by the Spirit (v11)
- The increasing knowing of these things is an ongoing work of the Spirit (v12)
- “Spiritual for Spiritual”: Spirit-given knowledge for Spirit-regenerated people

1John 4:13 12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit

- It is especially the work of His Spirit, Who abides in believers, to make us know our life in God by union with Christ.

Hebrews 6:9–12 9 But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. 10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

- Though the warning is given concerning specific individuals in the church, there is a general confidence of “things that accompany salvation” about the visible church taken as a whole.
- Still, it is the duty of “each one” to “show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope.” Assurance is given, in part, through diligent effort; we ought not to expect it apart from that effort (which effort, itself, we will all admit in retrospect had been given by God—which is part of how it functions unto our assurance!). This is “until the end.” Assurance is something that must be maintained, and spiritual sluggishness should alarm us. Faith and assurance do not present as complacency and presumption but as imitation of “those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Ephesians 3:14–19 14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

- The proof text is especially v17–18: a rooting and grounding in knowing the electing/saving love of Christ toward us. Prayer (such as this one) is one of those ordinary means that we ought rightly to use in pursuit of assurance.

. 2Pet. 1:10. ■ n. Rom. 5:1–2, 5. Rom. 14:17. Rom. 15:13. Eph. 1:3–4. Ps. 4:6–7. Ps. 119:32. ■ o. 1John 2:1–2. Rom. 6:1–2. Titus 2:11–12, 14. 2Cor. 7:1. Rom. 8:1, 12. 1John 3:2–3. Ps. 130:4. 1John 1:6–7. ■ p. Ps. 51:8, 12, 14. Eph. 4:30–31. Ps. 77:1–10. Ps. 31:22. Matt. 26:69–72. Luke 22:31–34. ■ q. 1John 3:9. Luke 22:32. Ps. 51:8, 12. ■ r. Mic. 7:7–9. Jer. 32:40. Isa. 54:7–14. 2Cor. 4:8–10.

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All right, we are still in. Westminster Confession of Faith. Chapter 18. It has four articles. The first article Uh distinguishes false Assurance from True assurance. Telling us that true assurance. Um, Does exist. And Then the second article. Uh, get talks about the nature. Of this Assurance of Uh, there it is an actual infallible.

Uh, hope that the spirit gives Uh, by working Grace as in us, and causing us to see The evidence of those Graces. And by himself being a seal unto us and that's what we completed last time. The third article talks about, Uh, Uh, and who get this Assurance. And how it is to be pursued, how the Lord gives us Assurance of faith.

And then the fourth article, We'll talk about. Um, How sometimes, even those who have had Assurance of Faith, can have it shaken or interrupted the language. And the confession is intermittent. Um, but that Believers do not fall. Um, Uh, into an utter despair. In which Assurance cannot be regained, but the Lord preserves and keeps them.

So, this week we are on When and who, and And how? And in the third article, This infallible Assurance does not. So, belong to the essence of But that a True Believer, may wait long and conflict with many difficulties. Before he be partaker of it. Yet being enabled by the spirit to know.

The things which are freely given him of God. He may without extraordinary Revelation in the right. Use of ordinary means attain there unto Therefore, it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence. To make his calling in the election Shore. That thereby his heart. May be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost and love and thankfulness to God.

And then strength and cheerfulness. In the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance. So far, is it from inclining, men to looseness? And so in this third article, we have basically how Assurance intersects with the Christian Life. Now, the first line is very important. It is uh, something that in the further Reformation.

In the 17th century. Uh, the 1600s, uh, was in advance on what was understood and taught in the Reformation of the 16th century or the 1500s. Um, There was a very strong importance when talking about justification by faith alone in the 1500s or covering, That Doctrine. That Bible truth.

Uh, there was a great emphasis on The nature then of saving. And one of the important things about the nature of saving Faith was that saving faith is certain saving faith is sure of what it believes saving Faith, rests itself upon Christ. Who is the who is the object of saving faith?

Uh, And so there was much made. Of the certainty. Of saving faith. But one of the difficulties, then arose is, there were many genuine Believers Who were sure of Christ. They just weren't sure that they themselves were in Christ. So, there were four of the Lord Jesus, but they weren't sure.

Of themselves. And so, the Of themselves being in the Lord, Jesus. And so, the necessity of Understanding and distinguishing differentiating. The one from the other. Uh arose, and that's why we get this first line. This infallible Assurance does not so belong to the essence of But that a True Believer may wait long.

And conflict with many difficulties. Uh, and so there are scriptures. And we are going to. Consider the The one that they give as a proof, text first, John. Uh, five, I think they just gave 13, but, uh, we're gonna take verse 12 with it for context as well. Although, in God's Providence to you, if you've been, uh, following in the serial readings and using the devotionals and meditating upon, um, the the scripture throughout first John, you've been discovering that, The whole letter of first John is, especially for Christians for those who believe to gain Assurance of Faith by the inward evidences.

Of the various Graces believing that Jesus is God. Who entered the world? Who came into the world? Not a mere man. His humanity is not his first nature. Um, Uh believing that Jesus is God. Loving God. Loving uh Christians because they belong to the Lord. Jesus Christ, loving God's law.

Yeah. And keeping his Commandments, all these things that the Lord increasingly produces and Believers. As Believers, see, that see those things in their lives. As you see, In your life. Being more and more. Uh, certain of Jesus being the son of God, that that is something that you're sure of something that you think is vitally important as we'll see, uh, especially in verse 12, of First, John 5, As you increase in love towards God and therefore, hate your sin more and more for its sinfulness, for its being against him.

Even not, not just because of the consequences of your sin to you, but that you would sin against Are against God who has given himself for you in the Lord Jesus. And to you, and loving his church more and more. And the man's breakfast yesterday, one of the One of the things that we considered is that a Believer is not the bride of Christ.

He is a member Of the bride of Christ. Now, I love my wife's fingers, and my wife's nose, and her eyes, and her hair and her personality. And all the things that are parts of her, with the love that I have for her. And this is one of the ways we considered yesterday.

That we That we know that Jesus loves every member of his bride. Every part of his, Of his bride with the love that he has for the bride as a whole. But Jesus has a bride, not a harem. Someone who Says, well, you know, I love Jesus, and Jesus loves me, but I don't need to be part of the church.

Doesn't understand. The saving love that Jesus has for any member of the body. Is for that member of the body as a member of the body. You know, I don't if my wife Clips her, fingernails, uh, I don't, you know, run to the trash and save all the clipped nails because of how much I love those Nails.

No, I love my wife. And as soon as those fingernails are not part of our body, they're not. They're not so important to me anymore. Um, this, I this idea. That you can. That you can love Christ without loving his church. Um, and that you can Uh, enjoy Christ's love to you.

Apart from being loved by him as part of his Uh, is a very dangerous. Idea is Against how scripture talks about Christ and his salvation and his love. Well, one of the things that God produces in you that by which he increases your Assurance of faith is that you love his church and you love the members of his And so as you see all of those things, the as you see the spirit producing, all of those things in you, you know, That God is the one who has given these things and that you do have the song and you do have life.

But, Uh, love for Christ, our keeping of his Commandments our love for his church. And sometimes, especially particular members there of Are all imperfect. Uh, and so We can see how there would be this difficulty. And the fact that this is an ongoing work of the spirit and that God gives a letter of the Bible to Believers, So that they may gain Assurance.

Is one of the great indicators that not all believers have Assurance yet? And so this infallible Assurance doesn't doth not so belong to the essence of But that a True Believer may wait long. And conflict with many difficulties. Before he be partaker of it. This is very important that you not think.

Since I do not have Assurance of my faith since I am not certain, That I am in a state of grace. I'm not certain of my own faith. I'm not certain of my love for God. I'm not certain of my love for the church. Um, I'm not certain. That I am in Christ.

That you not think that because you are not sure of those things that you are. Therefore lost. Saving Faith is certainty about Jesus. Not certainty about itself. Uh, or certainty about your fruit. So first, John 5 verse 12 through 13. He who has the son has life. He who does not have the Son of God.

Does not have life. Okay, so if if Jesus is uh, not the Son of God and the only way that The one true God. Um, can have this one begotten son as if God is. Father, and Son. And of course, also Spirit from Everlasting to Everlasting This does not allow of the idea.

Uh, that there are many sons of God, of which Jesus is, you know, the chiefest, Uh, no. There is one Son of God. That is the only begotten son. Uh, whom you must have to have life and whatever else you, uh, you lack, however, imperfect. Uh you you are, if you have Jesus, if you have God, the son, you have life.

But whatever else you do have however good, you think you are. If you do not have Jesus. You do not actually have life. Yes. Jordan Uh, your comments moment ago about those Believers who struggle with insurance and then begin to doubt their own salvation because they didn't have Assurance.

Uh, yet they may very well be Believers. They may very well have Christ being in price. Uh, it's a, it's a potentially vicious cycle because to begin this doubt and and then you start thinking, maybe I shouldn't partake of the Lord Southern. Because now, I doubt and you start to instead of, you know, feasting on price and pretending to the means you start turning like spend the rest in years because like beautiful.

If there since that precious Connection between, hey, do you doubt your salvation, right? If you're still living with this, and you got this Assurance tab, this is insurance. You also got the the, the catechism question with respect to those adults and, and still attending for supper. And yeah, that's actually a very strong Larger.

Catechism on. May those who doubt take of the supper. And how many of the performed in the 1500s? If you weren't, if you didn't have Assurance, you weren't admitted to the table. Um, And still that was, uh, That was one of the reasons why just a little recent kind of reformed history.

Uh the Heritage reformed Dr. Bakey's new denomination. Well, I guess new 30, 40 years ago, whatever. Now um, Exists is because the Netherlands were formed of which he was originally a minister. Uh, held this only those who had been brought to an infallible Assurance and said, could take particularly the Lord's Supper and says they would have the Lord's supper.

Once a year and in a Congregation of We got five, six hundred people. You might have seven elderly people. Um, who took the Lord's Supper? From the entire congregation, you had to have a vision experience. Um, And, When we arrived in Orange City Iowa, which is very heavily Dutch reformed area.

There had just been in the previous month. A car wreck. In which several late teens and early 20s. Members of the Netherlands Reformed Church. Um, had been killed. And they had not had their They used to refer to a vision experience or something like that. They had not add Uh, their moment of assurance.

Had not taken the supper. And so, the The elders and Ministers of their congregation were unwilling to speak with any they were professing. Christians. But they're elders. And, Ministers were unwilling to speak with any certainty. Um, about a hope for them. Um, So yes, this is an uh, an important development and you can see how pastorally dealing With so many believers who lacked Assurance and bringing them to the means Um, Uh, would lead to The ver, the great carefulness.

In chapter 18. Of our confession. You double check the field real fast.

Could be already in the hallway alone.

The app has been unstable this week so they probably updated it. Uh, yes, Dave. Going to say to me. The Armenian experience. Is a horrible. Yeah. Well, how could you have Assurance if there was no such thing as perseverance? Well and also, if you think that your goodness is achieved by how well you do.

Uh, yeah. If you think that the difference between, Uh, those who have faith and those who don't is in the person. Rather than in the work that God does in,

I mean, I used to say to people that were not for my quote of Salvation, I'd rather be a happy Pagan than a miserable Christian, because it was because I did not, I could not keep from a failing.

And thank you for that. Um, So he who as the son has life. Uh, that itself is is fairly assuring. Uh, because you may not think that you have good enough. You. Well, you may know that you don't have good enough Faith. Your faith isn't good enough. It's the Jesus in whom you believe is good enough.

You may think you may know that you don't have good enough love. You may know that you don't have any of those things, but if you have him, And this is often. You know, this is advice I've given to you before. Autobiographically you can now anchor it to this text, if you wish, he who as the son has life, And so, when you realize all the things that are imperfect and or missing in you, You cling to Christ.

And you cry out to God. None who have Christ can be lost. And you just cling to Christ. Um, he who has the son has life? Um, and if you have him, You will have from him and in him all those things that come with him. You hope in him for those things, you don't say, well, I don't need those things because I have him.

That is not how that works. Yes, dude. Live streamness. Again. Again or it's not backed up, uh, try and reload.

Okay, I I think it is back. So Dave, what would you say to is struggling Christian? Who hears what you're saying? That, you know, if you have price, you have life. And their response by people said, how do I know that I have price? Are you what you're saying?

I, I agree with that, but I'll even know that much. Well, then I would say, yeah. Pay attention to the rest of the question. Question and answer. Um, you know, that's that's uh, that's the use of first John. That's the use of second Peter one. Um, But knowing that you have Christ is the Assurance.

Uh, if you don't know that you have Christ, I would say You you cling to him, you cry out to God for Faith. You cry out to God, to help your unbelief. Um, Uh, you learn to distinguish and hopefully you have very theologically careful. Uh, teaching. In your church, that will help you distinguish.

I lost, I lost the thought. Um, that will help you distinguish. Trusting in Christ from trusting in faith.

You realize? Uh, hoping in Jesus. You know, there is a moment of saving Faith a moment of justification. But there's also a lifetime. Of trusting in him. And, Those who have him have. They cannot be lost. And so, You will not bother yourself with. Um, Did I have him before?

If you have him now, Uh, so, uh, So, what I would say to that person is Uh, hope in Christ. And you can. Now, also, this also comes with with careful theology. Saving faith is something that Jesus gives And there is such a thing as someone who spends years in or grows up in a reformed.

And learns, how to mimic, saving Faith without having saving Faith. That's a, that's a reality that you should be aware of and that That you should. If you are concerned about that, you should not easily dismiss it. But you also know that God is the one who gives saving faith.

And so, if you are concerned that you don't have it, You should ask him for it. Uh, because it's not something that you can produce from yourself and therefore not something that you have to produce from yourself. You have to believe that you can cry out to God for help for believing.

Was he able to reload the stream? Sometimes, okay. Uh, Christian. The members, as you mentioned earlier, will be about yesterday. One, where the air come from and thinking that. We're all married to Christ of like individually rather than as a church like the president. Um where where the idea that the individual is married to Christ rather than a part of the body?

Um, humanly speaking, I would say, uncareful thinking Of course, there are not only humans in play. Um, I, I think. The. The serpent. The dragon, the ancient serpent. Uh, hates the woman and her children. And, One of his attacks upon both of them. Uh, is The idea of the free agent Christian.

So, You know, first Peter 5 One through nine or so. Um, this is really. Uh, tackling the Finding it difficult and unpleasant to be. Uh, in a church with Sinners shepherded by Sinners, or to Shepherd those who are sinners. Is not a recent problem. Um, But one of the ways, the Devours them.

Is by convincing them that? They may operate without the body. And they may operate without their Shepherds. And so he breaks them off of the flock. And it sounds. Uh very sweet, you know, it's a it's like a saccharine aspartame theology. Uh, to say just me and Jesus just me and Jesus.

Um, But that's not how Jesus saves. And that's not who his bride is. Um, so Um, Satan prays easily upon those who are. Theologically uncaredful. Uh, especially if you can use our emotions to convince us. That's something that really is satanic and deadly. Is actually something that is really spiritual and good.

Um, He who does not have the Son of God does not have life. So, someone who has Yeah, there thinks he has doesn't really have any of it, you know, 92 percent of Christian doctrine. But the eight percent that he's missing is the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ and the union of the Divine and human Natures, and the one person, Doesn't have life.

You can have a ton of Doctrine, you can do a bunch of Uh, social Um, acts of Charity. You can be, you know, as And the keeping of the law and the keeping of the law faultless Pharisee. Um, But he doesn't have life.

So it's in that context. Uh, Union with Christ, Jesus himself. Being the only spiritual life that you can have. Um, our dear children. You love to learn things and learn to repeat things and do things that that your parents want you to do. And they'll teach you to do from the Bible and praise God, that he gives you that desire and that pleasure.

But the only life, the only spiritual life that you have as Jesus himself. Uh, and it's in the, in light of that teaching, in verse 12. Uh, that he then gives the purpose of a letter as a whole. These things I have written to you, who believe in the name of the son of God.

And so, this is why, this is the proof text for a True Believer. May wait. Long and conflict many difficulties. Before he'd be a partaker of assurance because he's writing to those who are True. Believers, These things, I've written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God.

These things I have written to True Believers that you may know that you have eternal life. So, he's writing to those who are Christians. So that they may come to Assurance of F. So you see how this becomes the the text that proves that Assurance of faith is not of the essence of saving Faith.

It's something that Even those who believe. Initially, still need to come to.

So there are those who are sure about him. They believe in the name of the Son of God. But they're not sure about themselves having him. They still need to know that they have eternal life. And then, of course, Um, This really is a proof text for further on in article three.

We're not studying it yet but we'll finish the verse that you may continue to believe. In the name of the son of God, Assurance of faith is one of the things by which God gives you to persevere to continue. Uh, in your faith. Um,



I don't think I want to start the First Corinthians 2 passage. With the little time that we have left. More questions about this. Okay. Let's pray.

We thank you again. Our God. That you who gave us life creating us in your image. I have now come to be. Our life since we sinned in Adam and we died with him. In the day that he ate the fruit. When we thank you that. You have given your.

Only begotten eternally begotten son. To be ours. Not just to be. The object of our faith and The things that we think about him. But he himself to be ours and you yourself, then our God in the person of the son, To be ours that we would be yours and you would be ours and you would be our life.

Well, we confess. Oh, Lord. That Even as your word teaches us here. It's possible for us to have you. And still, not be sure that we have you So we believe help our unbelief. And give us this work of your spirit. Give us produce in us, the evidences. That the letter of first, John talks about Give us the ability to see it with.

Uh, thankful humility. Rather than spiritual Pride. So that knowing it to be a work that you have done rather than being proud of anything that we have done. We might be the more encouraged. Since what you have done is, And almighty. And everlasting. We pray, especially for our children.

That they would. No, Jesus, your son. And have life in him. And that this Faith would also grow up into a full Assurance. As your spirit produces in them, the fruit of saving. And makes them to. That he your spirit has given to them. This saving faith and its fruit.

Now, we pray that as you gather us to yourself in the public worship. You would make us so to rest upon you and in you, So, to Rejoice over you. So, to respond to you, As even much to be helped. Uh, in our Assurance of Just by drawing near to you.

So be glorified in the worship and help us. As we come to give it, we ask through Jesus. Amen.