

“Reviving Assurance” □ WCF 18.4.q (TPH p930)

2024.08.18 Sabbath School Lesson

Hopewell ARPC, Culleoka, TN

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:p

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;q and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.r

1John 3:4–9

4 Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. 5 And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. 6 Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. 8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

- The genuine difference that genuine conversion makes
- The permanent difference that genuine conversion makes

Luke 22:31–34

31 And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” 33 But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.” 34 Then He said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.”

- the love for Christ and the brethren that comes from Christ Himself, by Christ’s own efforts and through His means

Ps. 51:8–12

8 Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.
9 Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.
10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
11 Do not cast me away from Your presence,

And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

- The removal of assurance as an act of Sovereign love
- The restoration of assurance as an act of Sovereign grace
- You must continue in (return to) that in which you began in grace. You must turn to the very God Whose hand seems to be heavy upon you

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.

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

All right, we are Still studying Assurance of Faith, we have considered now. In the fourth article of Westminster Confession 18. Assurance of Faith can be shaken, diminished intermittent. And that brings us almost to the end of the fourth article. I'll read the whole thing for you. Uh 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 witch in the meantime, They are supported from. Despair. So, the assembly has given us. Uh, three proof texts. Uh, for this yet.

Are they never utterly destitute and so on? Um, Out of which by the operation of spirit, this Assurance, main due time be revived and they are one in first John 3, not surprising. The book of First, John being said that we may know dealing. Uh, very much with our Assurance effect.

One from Luke 22 again, not too surprising. When Peter, Was certain that he would go even to death. Uh for the Lord Jesus just a few hours before he would stumble greatly in the midst of that sudden and vehement Temptation that we considered last week. And that many of us not that particular Temptation.

We've never been in the high priest's Courtyard in the night that Christ was On trial, but many of us have experienced. Sudden environment Temptation, even Temptation that we have. Found our hearts and Minds and males giving into succumbing under. To our own shock and horror. And so, Much help last week in thinking about that and think about it a little bit more this week.

In the area of Not being utterly destitute of the seed of God and Uh, being in due time. Uh, having our Assurance in due time revived. And then the third proof decks they give us is out of Psalm 51 again not surprising as Uh, we've been reminded in the last couple of weeks.

Psalm 51 is written on the occasion of David. Having been confronted by Nathan, the prophet About everything that he has done. Uh, Uh, uriah's wife and killing Uriah and Failing to own it up. Before the Lord being much more indignant about? Hypothetical other man's sin than he was about his own sin.

Until Nathan came and said, you are the man. And his response. Uh, asking for the restoration. Of his Assurance. Of. So, when we think about those times in our Walk with the Lord, in which we are. Uh, in which we are. Having our Assurance. Uh, intermittent. Uh, we've had Assurance.

Uh lacking it now particularly because of some sin and the and gods withdrawn, the light of his countenance from us, we We talked about how when you're in that conditioning, you remember your former Assurance, but you no longer think that it was Assurance. You wonder if you were self-deceived.

And if you've ever been saved, and These are very, very Difficult in trying Seasons that Believers can go through. But praise God. In his Mercy to the Westminster assembly building on uh over 100 Years of reformation at that time. Much pastoral experience and leading Believers through such seasons of Had gone into.

Uh the confession of Faith. So it covers things like adoption covers, things like Assurance things that you don't have for instance in What's called the three forms Community. Although, the three forms of unit are Practical, we'll invite you. If? Able to sustain it physically. Certainly, I hope you would desire it spiritually after the afternoon preaching.

We've been. Using. Our, uh, Compiled. I guess they're not that little are compilations of Uh, of the documents of the Squad's Presbyterian Church and this week we come to some of saving knowledge which is not very well known. Uh, the directory for um, you know, the confession catechins directories for public worship directory for family worship.

I think all of those are More well known than Cemetery knowledge. But again, very pastoral document. Just addressing you why you need to be saved. How you may be saved encouragements to come to Christ evidences of true faith? A real concern for believers to be able to know that things are well between them and God.

Uh, because Christianity is not just a A outward set of religious exercises and life rules. Uh God is real and like with him and in him is real and we must deal with him genuinely and when we do we find that he is gloriously gracious. And so, the Christian It's a wonderful thing.

So, When we are. Uh lacking Insurance. What hope do we have? The first text they give us is just verse 9. In first John 3, where which is, uh, Whoever has been born of God does not sin for his seed, that is God's seed remains in him. He cannot sin because he has been born of God.

I'm gonna get back up to verse 4. Give ourselves a running. Contextual start. Whoever commits sin, also commits, lawlessness and sin is lawlessness. And you know that he was manifested to take away our sins and in him, there is no sin. That he who was manifested in the in in whom we are Is Christ whoever abides in him, does not sin.

Whoever sins. Has neither seen him nor known him little children, let no and deceive you, he who practices righteousness, he who practices righteousness is righteous. Just as he is

righteous, he who sends his of the devil. For the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Whoever has been born of God does not sin. For his seed, remains in him. And he cannot sin. Because he has been born. Of God. And so the Apostle John here, in first John 3. Describing. Uh, the situation in the Christian's life. Uh, that is similar to that, which Paul describes in Galatians chapter 5.

The, the believer has within him, he is not in his sin. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are not in your sin. You are not even in yourself. Uh, you are in the Lord, Jesus Christ, believing in him. Brings you out of yourself and into the Lord.

Jesus, praise God. But you still have sin in, you You still have that remaining flesh that remaining sinfulness from your original nature, from your former nature, but you also have Christ's dwelling in your heart by faith. You have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, you have the seed of God in you.

And so, Uh, when you sin Uh, it is from you but it is not. It is not you as you are in Christ. It is you as uh you were outside of Christ and it is the you that you are supposed to be killing. That are you are to count dead and that you are to be starving and suffocating and And not feeding and not tolerating.

Now the person who does not have this battle, it is not because they lack, the sinful nature. The battle comes because the spirit desires strives lust against the Flesh, and the flesh lust strives against the spirit. If you don't have that battle, if you don't have the desire of the spirit to love God and obey, God then you don't have the Life of Christ in you.

The one who wishes that he could get away with more sin because his sin is very inconvenient to him and painful to him. Embarrassing to him as that consequences. But does not strive against his sin because he hates sin in its sinfulness. He hates it because it is against God who he loves.

One, who lacks? That is not a Believer. At all, and that's what. John is describing here and Uh, it's actually not part of The main argument, when he says, whoever has been born of God, does not sin for his sin for his seed remains in him. He's talking about your new nature.

It is impossible for your new nature to sin. Who you are? From God, in Christ, by the Holy Spirit, does not commit sin. When you sin, you sin for real. But you sin not from who you are in Jesus and who you will be forever. You sin from whom you have been in yourself.

And whom you are supposed to be killing actively in your life. And Who will be one day gone forever. The last vestiges of your former former self outside of Christ will not continue past this life. At your death. If you're a Believer, you will be made perfect in Holiness.

You will immediately pass into Glory. When you rise again on the last day, there's not going to be a particle of sinfulness. Left in you. And so, That permanence That permanence of the difference that Christ makes in you. Is one of the things that you may be sure of and hopeful of, as you continue to cling to God in the Lord, Jesus Christ, even if your Assurance has been taken away, remember, Saving Faith is being certain about.

To being certain about Christ. Assurance of faith is being certain about whom. Is being certain about yourself and the work that God has done in you to apply Christ to you. A believer who loses that certainty about himself that he is in Christ. Still has not lost his certainty about whom Christ.

Okay, and so don't let Satan. Don't let the flesh lie to you about Jesus when you lose your Assurance of This is, this is one of the things that when Christians backslide They are tempted into Wicked doubts, they can translate their uncertainty about themselves into questions that they know the answer to, but they're still asking the questions, is it?

Real is God, real is Christ, real is salvation? Real is forgiveness real. And so, Uh, it is important that you remember this. Uh, that yes, God and Christ and salvation are real. And you cling to God in Christ and you cling to him, even if you don't know about yourself, Knowing that when Christ saves, he doesn't just make a genuine difference in you.

Giving you a new nature. From which you love God, and Obey him. He makes a permanent difference in you. It is impossible for the new nature to be taken away. It is impossible for the seed of God. That is in you by the new birth. To perish. And that's the point that they're making here when they say yet.

Are they neverly utter yet? Are they never utterly destitute? Of that seed of God and life of f. And so forth. That genuine conversion makes a genuine difference. The genuine conversion also makes a permanent difference.

Moving then to the loop, 22 passage.

Yes, sir. Oh Christian. Seems like, This was denied and that there's That the believer in their new nature of those Thompson. Can be super slow, your belief in purgatory and that there's still some fundamental evidence to happen when it's striking how wonderful that is of your pets, to be absent in the bodies could be just folder and, um, probably the night.

Yeah, I'm We always want to put the best possible. Uh, give the best possible version of Um, someone Uh, opposes the argument of someone who opposes the truth. And, Papers are not monolithic or United. No matter how you know much, they love to say that they are until they're blue blue in the face.

Uh, just a cursory knowledge of church history. Um, would make us to know that I suspect there are papers who say That. The. Uh, chasings and and Um work of God and this life isn't enough to get rid of the flesh. And so there, there are probably some who You know, their idea of purgatory is that there's some flesh left and you can't quite Uh, make it to heaven yet, but you're right absent from the body present with Christ.

Absolutely destroyed. I mean all biblical Uh, Doctrine absolutely destroys the paper's position but it is this really sweet to know that uh we are delivered. When we are delivered from the body. Although we do not want to be unclothed. Uh, separated from our body. Uh, it is better to be still further clothed with Christ.

But that in order to be present with Christ, we must have Uh, all of our sin taken away. Those who are with him. Um, Hebrews 12 tells us are The Souls of the just made perfect. Uh, and we all look forward to that very much. And one of the things that guarantees that is that if you're a Christian, it is by the seed of God in you.

First John 3 verse 9. And when you are not sure that you are a Christian. It is all the more necessary. To be sure about those truths and to cling to Christ. In whom you would have all of those truths. And so you, you continue looking to God, you continue clinging to Christ, you continue crying out to him, like We'll, Uh, Lord willing in the Psalm 51 passage Um, wonderful.

You think about Uh, how Jesus sings Psalm 51, right? Uh, he sang Psalm 51 growing up. He didn't have any sin to repent him. Didn't know. Uh, the frown of God at all until the cross on a kind of our sin. Uh and yet there are many places in the Psalms where you can only sing in Union with Christ, you don't want to be treated in accordance with your own righteousness.

Do you when you sing and pray those things but you can do. So, in Union with Christ, you can even do so not just with Christ's righteousness. But with respect to the new nature, he's given you. That is in him and United to him. Dying the imperfections that are left in you, but knowing that, even those have been produced by a Grace that will finish the work, that it's begun.

Well, just as there's much in the Psalms that you can't sing except in Union with Christ, There was much in the Psalms that Christ couldn't sing accepted Union with us because it had to do with sin. And, and you can You can see how. Uh, God prepared for his son when he was coming into the world, to be able to sympathize with Christians.

Christians who are feeling real things, like my sin has gone above my head, like Waters. And I'm drowning. And the Lord Jesus. Learns as he grows in wisdom and stature in favor with God. And with men. And he's reading and singing and praying, the Psalms he's increasing in his sympathy with us.

And, Uh, much of that sympathy then goes into what he describes here. In Luke 22. And again, they've just given us verse 32. The I have prayed for you but we'll we'll read verses 31 through 34. And the Lord said Simon Simon indeed. Satan has asked for you that he may sift.

You as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail. And when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren But he said to him, Lord, I am ready to go with you both the prison and to death. Then he said, I tell you Peter.

The rooster shall not crow this day. Before you will deny three times. That, you know, me. And again, there is here. Uh, love for Christ. That has been given not. Not from himself, but by God, remember, When Jesus asks his disciples, who do you say that? I am. What is it that Peter answers?

Peter answers, you are The Christ, the son of God. And what does Jesus say about where that came from? Since you didn't learn this from man, God taught you. This God gave you to know this in your heart. And that's why even though Peter is going to deny Jesus, That night in the high priest's Courtyard.

That place where love for Christ as this. The Son of God love for Jesus as the Christ, the son of God. That cannot be taken away from him. Even while he's denying Christ, he has love for Christ in him. Uh, it's massively inconsistent. That's one of the things that tortures us about our sin and our failing to speak for the Lord and being ashamed of him and even denying him with lips or life, it's massively inconsistent.

But the real love for God. And even the real love for the Brethren which is behind Jesus telling him, I have prayed for you. So now it's not just God, the Father who is upholding, who is God, the son, who is upholding him and of course, by whom is God.

The son of Holy holding him, God, the spirit. And so there's this. A Triune collaboration in holding up a fisherman who is about to deny the, the second person of the Trinity his Redeemer and you see the, the massiveness of the grace of God, that also operating in your life, dear Christian.

Because God is the one who is giving you faith in Christ. Christ is always praying for you. The spirit is a seal upon you into the day of redemption, which we considered in the proof texts of earlier articles in this chapter of the confession. But Jesus, when he says, I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail.

It's really amazing. It sure feels and seems to Peter like it failed, doesn't it? And when you have returned to me, you know, there's never any question as to whether the prayers of Jesus are going to be affected. If the prayers of Elijah, a man with, like, nature unto us are effective, and if the prayers of anyone else who is made right with God, Justified through faith in, Jesus Christ are effective in their working are active in their working.

How much more the prayers of the Lord Jesus. So it's and when you have returned to me, Strengthen your brethren. That the love that. Peter has for Jesus. Has part and parcel with it just like we've been hearing in first John. Just we like we have in our serial reading this morning in the first half of second John, the love that you have for Christ has part and parcel with it, love for the Brethren.

A love for the Brethren. That didn't come from you. It came from Jesus. When you love one, another as Christ has loved you, it's not just an imitative love, it's a derivative love The love that you have for one another like Christ's love for us. Is from Christ's love for us.

And so, Uh, although it was God's will. Uh, he ordained this and the instrumentality of the devil is real. He is the one who Has asked for this God permits it. Yet God, who Wills and permits for his children, even such as are his children to go through Seasons, like this is yet upholding them.

The faith that he has given them, cannot be lost entirely. The love that he has given them for Christ, although sometimes it is a small and to us, it feels entirely overwhelmed and overshadowed by that, which lacks it cannot be lost entirely The love that we have for the Brethren that comes from the seed of God in us and comes from Christ's own, love in us, it cannot be lost entirely.

Jesus is praying. And the spirit is sustaining. And Believers shall be restored. From such backslidings and stumblings. And, Even from the loss. Of assurance and Faith. Now in in God's mercy to us, there are men like Peter. Of whom we often say, wow. I'm so glad that Peter was one of the Apostles so that I might know that someone of like character to me Cannot just be redeemed, but may even be imminently useful.

Uh in in the work of God. And then there are those like, David Of whom we often say, I don't think I have ever been. In my walk with the Lord in the story of his grace, in my life, says zealous for God, so courageous, so tender of conscience.

So desirous so hungering and thirsting for him. Finding such sweetness in him as I see in so much of David's history. And so much of, uh, of what God carries David to to write of his experience of God. And then, David falls into a sin, like this. And we say, Wow.

Let him who thinks he stands, take heed. Lest he fall. And, There is Grace even for such Believers. As fall into such sins as this. And that's one of the most precious things about Psalm, 51 the Temptation or the desire. It's not we won't say Temptation that would be a good thing uh to do.

Our time is fleeing from us. The desire is to do the psalm as a whole, but they've The assembly has given us verse 8, and verse 12. And we'll just take verse 8 through verse 12. Um, no to

children as I read this. Uh, who has broken? Uh, David's bones and what David is asking him to do.

And how Verse make me hear joy and gladness that the bones. You have broken. May Rejoice, hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities create in me a clean heart. Oh God. In you a steadfast Spirit within me, do not cast me away from your presence.

Do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me. The joy of your salvation. And uphold me. By your generous. Okay. So, who had broken David's bones? Says the bones you have broken, who is he praying to children? God, is it right to pray to anyone else? Of course, not.

And so, God is the one who has made him hurt so much in his soul. That it is as if his soul had bones and those bones were all broken. You know, when we talk about Brokenness, Um, I think we may not be as literal in the use of the metaphor.

Uh, as we ought to, I hope not many of you have had the pain of having a significant bone in your body broken. Uh, but if you have You can you can get a taste of what David is acknowledging that God has done to him. With respect to the sin that he has committed.

Not not so much against Bathsheb, although his sin against Bathsheba was huge Although the sin against Uriah was huge. Or his sin against the whole nation. Which are is not just some Nation somewhere, it's God's covenanted Nation. And his church on the earth. It sins against all of them were huge.

But in the horror, Of having been a believer of such eminence and genuineness, as we were just thinking about a few moments ago and then committing such sin. Remember he says against you and you only I have sinned So, yes, he's fallen short of the submission and a citizen love of Uriah and Bathsheba and then but he's fallen short of the glory of God.

And it is against his creator and against his Redeemer whom he has committed that sin and God has made him to feel it. You should desire. That when you stumble into Great sin. That God would make you to feel it. That he wouldn't let you have a seared conscience in which you feel nothing.

What that he would drive you back to himself. So that you would be able to cry out to him, make me hear joy and gladness that the bones. You have broken May Rejoice. And then down to verse 11 and 12 do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me by your generous.

Oh, so as David prays, Um, carried Along by the Holy Spirit writing scripture writing inherently. How does he ask God to restore this gladness to restore this? How does God do that? So, how question? The home answer. By whom. Does God restore joy and gladness in the believer. By whom does God, restore the knowledge of his nearness and fellowship in the believer.

By the Holy. Another one is as we as we grow in our understanding of who he is and what he does. I I hope your love for the Holy Increases. And Uh you are less and less vulnerable or susceptible to these crazy ideas of what true full, Holy Spirit Christianity looks like or that have grown up in the churches.

We want this kind of true full, Holy Spirit Christianity, That he would he who is our seal unto the hand who dwells in And when God has rightly, as it were broken, those of our souls in response to our sin, that his Spirit continues to strive with us. Stores to us.

Of our salvation. All right, so that's as much as we hope that we have seen now from the Bible. And when you read it in your Westminster confession, you don't say well, that's a very white, Western Scottish thing to say from the 17th century. No, you say, this is the truth of God.

That is true and real, and has genuine and Rich application in my life yet. Are they never utterly destitute? 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 endure time be revived.

Praise God. Amen, let's pray. You. Thank your God, The Giver of Salvation in your son and The Giver of assurance by the work of your spirit, applying your son, and the truth, and the reality of his salvation to our consciences. We praise you, and thank you. That. Uh, you are not only a giver of assurance, but a restorer of assurance.

O Lord, for any Among Us who may be in a season of the intermitting of their Assurance set yourself, set Christ at your spirit before them today. That they may lay hold of him and have the joy of their salvation restored. And if we any of us come to such a time, grant it to us, then in that time as well, we ask for Jesus.

Amen.