



# How Are We Saved?

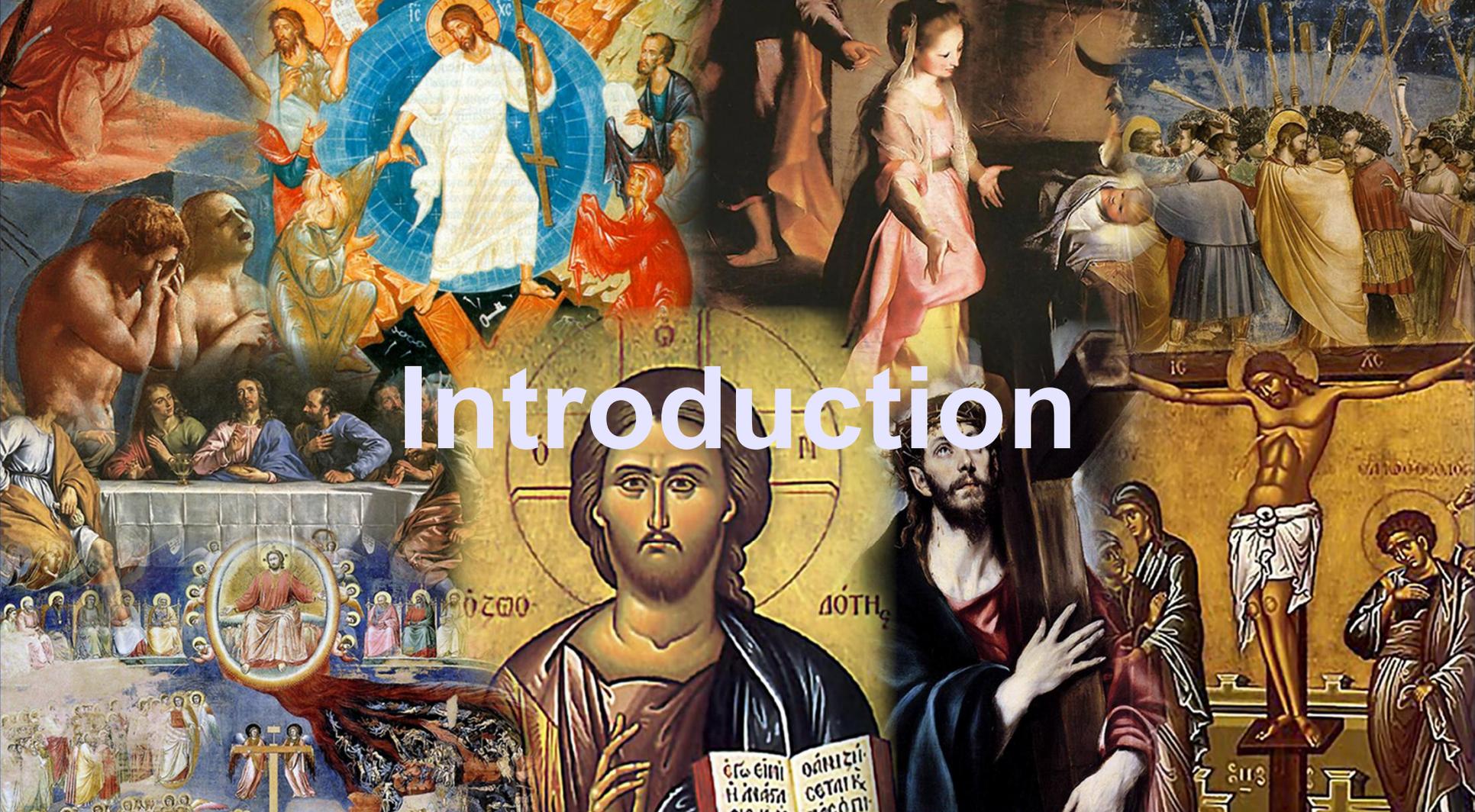
## 5. Eternal Security, Blessed Assurance. Or Not.

ST. JOHN THE WILDERNESS  
Episcopal Church • White Bear Lake, Minnesota

*Amazing Love*

■ O good Jesus, the word of the Father, the brightness of the Father's glory, whom angels desire to behold; teach me to do thy will; that guided by thy good spirit, I may come unto that blessed city where there is everlasting day and all are of one spirit; where there is certain security and secure eternity and eternal tranquility and quiet felicity and happy sweetness and sweet pleasantness; where thou, with the Father and the Holy Ghost livest and reignest, world without end.

■ St Gregory, d. 638



# Introduction

# Introduction

- There are three “levels” of **assurance of salvation** we might speak of:
  - 1. “**permanent**” assurance = **Eternal Security** or **Blessed Assurance**: we are *sure* that no matter what happens in the future, we *will* go to heaven.
  - 2. “**present**” assurance; assurance at this moment only: we are sure that if we die right now, we would go to heaven. However we have *no* guarantee what we might do in the future.
  - 3. **no assurance** at all – both our ultimate fate, as well as our current fate, if we were to die right now, is uncertain. ■

# Introduction

- One of the most cherished beliefs in **Baptist** and some **Reformed** (*Calvinist Reformed*) Christian traditions is **permanent assurance: Eternal Security**, also known as:
  - **Blessed Assurance**,
  - the perseverance of the elect,
  - “once saved, always saved” ■

# Introduction

- Other Christian traditions teach we may have *some* assurance of salvation in the present (**present assurance**), but we cannot be absolutely sure we won't someday lose our faith and deny Christ:
  - Some **Reformed** Christians (*Arminian* Reformed),
  - **Methodists**,
  - **Lutherans**. ■

# Introduction

- And some Christian traditions teach we can have neither. There is:
  - *no permanent assurance* (= **Eternal Security, Blessed Assurance**)
  - *no present assurance* of salvation if we were to die this instant.
- These traditions include:
  - **Roman Catholics,**
  - **Eastern Orthodox** Christians. ■

# Introduction

- **Assurance of salvation** (or not) is *not* an academic, fine point of doctrine that only theologians would be interested in; it can have enormous implications for:
  - Christian piety and spirituality,
  - the *anxieties* that plague us during our Christian journey,
  - how we view and live our lives. ■

# Introduction

- We will look at the doctrine of “assurance” in:
  - “Classical” **Calvinism**,
  - **Baptists** (“moderate” Calvinism),
  - **Arminian Reformed** Christianity and **Methodism** (= Wesleyan Arminianism),
  - **Lutheranism**,
  - **Roman Catholicism** and **Eastern Orthodox** Christianity. ■

# Introduction

- *A quick review: saved* – for what?
- Think of **heaven** as a great banquet and celebration.
- **Western Christians** would say our goal in this life is to be allowed into the banquet, and *not* get banished to the darkness outside, to **hell**. ■

# Introduction

- Among **Western Christians**, the **Churches of the Reformation** (“Protestants”) would say the difference between:
  - those who get in (the **saved**) and,
  - those who get sent away (the **damned**),
- is the *attitude of God towards us*, *not* any inherent quality of our own.
- Although *inside* we may be ugly sinners, if we have **faith**, God will externally cloak us with, reckon to us, impute to us the radiant **righteousness of Christ** (= “justify” us).
- When we stand before the door to the banquet (**heaven**), God will see us **radiant** with the cloak of **Christ’s righteousness**, and we will be allowed in.
- If we *lack* **faith**, God will see only our ugly, sinful selves and send us away, out into the darkness (to **hell**) we deserve as sinners. ■

# Introduction

- **Western Christians** of the **Roman Catholic** tradition, on the other hand, would say the difference between:
  - those who get in (the **saved**) and,
  - those who get sent away (the **damned**);
- is *not* God's attitude toward us, but whether we have nurtured and grown during our life on earth an *inner* ability to relate to God and others.
- *If* the state of our souls is so *poor* that we are *unable* to relate to God and others, then we can't participate in the banquet (**heaven**), and we will be sent away out to the darkness (to **hell**). ■

# Introduction

- **Eastern Christians** have a slightly different take.
- They don't worry about *getting into* the banquet: *everyone* "gets into" the banquet.
  - God's presence is *everywhere*. God is in "**heaven**." God is in "**hell**." God's infinite goodness, love, beauty permeates *all* of the world to come.
- Our goal in this life is to *prepare* for the banquet, to nurture and grow during our life on earth an inner ability to relate to God and others so we can participate in and enjoy the banquet:
  - Being stuck in the banquet unprepared, unable to participate and enjoy the banquet festivities, is **hell**!
  - St. Isaac the Syrian (7<sup>th</sup> century): the fire of **hell** is the fire of God's love (as felt by someone *unable* to love). ■

# Assurance in Classical Calvinism



# Assurance, Classical Calvinism



- In confronting the tension between:
  - **Human Free Will**, and
  - **God's Will** and **God's Absolute Sovereignty** (God's will be done!)
- **John Calvin** (1509-1564) came out overwhelmingly on the side of God's Will and God's Absolute Sovereignty. ■

Painting titled *Portrait of Young John Calvin*, Library of Geneva

# Calvinism

## Doctrine of Salvation

- In **Calvinism**'s Doctrine of Salvation, those that **God** *decides* will be **saved** are given an *irresistible grace* that:
  - redeems their fallen, corrupt human nature, and
  - gives them **faith** (= cause them be faithful).
- Because this grace causing them to be faithful is *irresistible*, because it cannot be refused, because its effects are “automatic,” One might say one is “forced” to be faithful.
  - “Forced,” but without a struggle, without our being aware of it happening.
  - Rather, we would perceive it as coming from within us. ■

# Calvinism

## Doctrine of Salvation

- In **Calvinism**'s Doctrine of Salvation, those that *God decides* will *not* be saved:
  - Are those who God *explicitly* pre-ordains will be *damned* (a view called **double predestination**), OR
  - Are those who God simply “passes over,” *not* giving them the **irresistible grace** – the grace *necessary* to be saved and have **faith** (a view called **single predestination**). ■

# Assurance, Classical Calvinism

- In Classical **Calvinism**, **Eternal Security** is a completely *logical consequence* of its theology of salvation, summarized by: “**TULIP:**”
- **T:** total depravity,
- **U:** unconditional election,
- **L:** limited atonement,
- **I:** irresistible grace,
- **P:** perseverance of the elect (the “saints”). ■

# Assurance, Classical Calvinism

## ■ Total Depravity (T)

- The image of God in the fallen human nature is *totally* corrupted.

## ■ Unconditional Election (U)

- God's decision who will be saved (the saved = "the elect") is not "conditioned" by anything we will do or not do in this life.

## ■ Limited Atonement (L)

- Jesus did not die on the cross for the sin of all humanity, but only for the sins of "the elect." Also called **Particular Redemption**. ■

# Assurance, Classical Calvinism

## ■ Irresistible Grace (I)

- The grace that God gives us that makes us faithful – a grace necessary and sufficient to be saved – is *irresistible*.

## ■ Perseverance of the Elect (Perseverance of the Saints)

- Once God has given you the irresistible grace that makes you faithful, you will remain faithful until death. *Once saved, always saved.* ■

# Assurance, Classical Calvinism

- **Classical Calvinism** can be **5-Point** or **4-Point Calvinism** (“L” = limited atonement denied)
- Teaches God is *completely and totally sovereign* over his creation.
- In particular, God is the *sole actor* in the salvation of his human creatures.
- God chose before the beginning of time who he will save, and who he will not save. (**Unconditional Election**)
- Those God chooses to save are given an “**Irresistible Grace**” that causes them to have a saving faith, allowing them to be externally cloaked with, imputed with the radiant **righteousness of Christ**.
- If you are one of the elect or the saved, you will *of course* **Persevere** to the end, because God had predestined you for salvation, and God’s grace is **irresistible**. ■

# Assurance, Classical Calvinism

- **Calvin** taught we *can know* in this life if we are one of **the elect** – and hence know if we have “**Eternal Security**” or “**Blessed Assurance**.”
- How? Two ways:
  - 1. The “**internal testimony**” of the **Holy Spirit**, bearing witness within us that we are children of God, elected / chosen to be saved.
    - We *feel* a deep inner, joy or confidence or conviction that we are saved.
  - 2. “**External**” **evidence**. Do we have right beliefs? Do our lives manifest the “fruits” of the Spirit? Good works should follow “automatically” from a true **faith** (a good tree bears good fruit), and would be *evidence* that we are true believers. ■

# Assurance, Classical Calvinism

- **Calvinists** disagree whether (1) alone, or (2) alone, or (1) and (2) are necessary to know you are saved.
- A related controversy that arises among Calvinists who believe in **Eternal Security** is whether a genuine saving **faith** is faith in:
  - 1. Jesus as Savior alone (= the “**Free grace**” stance). A saving **faith** is acceptance that God has saved us through grace alone, a pure gift.
  - 2. Jesus as both Savior and Lord (= the “**Lordship salvation**” ) stance. A saving **faith** also means we accept Jesus as our Lord, meaning our lives must display obedience to the commandments and the fruits of the Spirit. ■

# Assurance, Classical Calvinism

- The *anxiety* a **Calvinist** may face is *convincing themselves* they are *truly* one of **the elect**, one of the **saved**:
  - Is their **faith** joyous or strong or confident enough (the inner testimony of the Spirit)? And / or:
  - Do they have right belief? Does their life display **good works**, the “fruits” of Spirit? ■

# Assurance, Classical Calvinism

- If a **Calvinist** *does* feel secure in the knowledge he or she is of **the elect** and **saved**:
  - They may expect anyone else who is *really* a Christian should feel *equally secure*.
- Because they have *external* criteria to assess a genuine saving **faith**:
  - They may feel they can apply those criteria to other professing Christians – suggesting so-and-so is probably *not* saved because they do this, or believe this (false) doctrine, or live in a certain way. ■

# Assurance, Classical Calvinism

- For **the elect**, the law and the commandments are *instruction* (the so called **Third use of the law**) on how they can slowly change their corrupted and darkened souls and become holier (= **sanctification**) over a course of a lifetime:
  - They can do this with help from God (grace), who loves them, who has chosen them as one of **the elect**, given them the gift of salvation.
  - They can do this confident they are already “justified” and hence **saved**:
  - *That is*: they are already externally cloaked by the radiant **righteousness of Christ (= justified)** and guaranteed entrance into the heavenly banquet. ■

# Assurance in the Baptist Tradition



# Assurance for Baptists

- Baptists tend to say they are “moderate” Calvinism or “**1-point Calvinist**” in that they have modified the TULIP, keeping intact *only* the **perseverance of the elect = Eternal Security = Blessed Assurance**. “TULIP:”
- ~~T: total depravity~~ → near total depravity
- ~~U: unconditional election~~
- ~~L: limited atonement~~
- ~~I: irresistible grace~~
- P: perseverance of the elect or saints. ■

# Assurance for Baptists

- Now in Classical Calvinism, **P, the perseverance of the elect** follows logically from the fact that **election is unconditional**:
  - God *decides* before the beginning of time who will be **saved** and who will be **damned**.
  - That decision is not “conditioned” by anything a human being does. ■

# Assurance for Baptists

- **Baptists** however believe **election is *conditional*** – although we are nearly depraved from **original sin**, we are *still* capable of making a **decision** *for or against* Christ.
- Furthermore **God's grace is *not irresistible***. God is love, and love works *persuasively*, not coercively.
- We can *choose* to reject God's grace (in this belief they are very "Arminian").
  - **Jacobus Arminius** (1560-1609) thought the view of God implied by Calvinism was too harsh, and proposed a greater role for human free will in salvation.
  - He taught God's grace was necessary for salvation, but we can choose to cooperate with God's grace, or reject God's grace. ■

# Assurance for Baptists

- But nonetheless, **Baptists** teach that if we do, at some point, have a “moment of **faith**,” and:
  - accept what God is offering us,
  - accept that Jesus is our Lord and Savior,
- Then that moment of **faith** causes us to be externally cloaked with, imputed with the **righteousness of Christ**, and:
  - We are then *eternally saved*, we have **Eternal Security**. “Once saved, always saved,”
  - The loss of salvation is *impossible* for us. ■

# Assurance for Baptists

- Now God's grace is still *resistible*.
- We can still choose to accept or reject God's grace.
- But even if our **faith** later falters, God's faithfulness does *not*.
- God *will never take back* the gift of salvation.
- God is bound by his own unconditional promise to be faithful, even if we are faithless, for "God cannot deny himself."
- We cannot *gain* salvation by good works, nor we cannot *lose it* by "bad" works. ■

# Assurance for Baptists

- The moment of **faith** “tattoos” you with salvation.
- Once you have the “tattoo,” it remains with you indefinitely.
- You don’t have to maintain an attitude of fondness for tattoos to ensure that the tattoo remains on your arm.
- In fact you might change your mind the minute you receive it!
- But that does not change the fact that you have a permanent tattoo on your arm.
- Forgiveness and salvation is applied at the moment of **faith**, and its permanence is not contingent upon the permanence of one’s **faith**. ■

# Assurance for Baptists

- Adrian Rogers, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention:
- **Can you imagine the emotional state of a child who does not know from day to day whether or not he is a member of the family? Today, since he was a good boy, he is considered a member. But tomorrow, if he misbehaves, he may no longer be a member. Today he is loved by his father. Tomorrow he may not be. This child would be a neurotic mess! You are a part of your family, regardless of your behavior. So it is in the family of God, too. If you belong to Christ, you are part of the family, and can enjoy the emotional security our Heavenly Father wants us to experience. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:27-29). ■**

# Assurance for Baptists

- Charles Stanley, senior pastor First Baptist Atlanta writes: “[Hodges] **argues convincingly that Satan can completely shipwreck a believer’s faith but that this in no way affects the believer’s security.**” ... **“The Bible clearly teaches that God’s love for His people is of such magnitude that even those who walk away from the faith have not the slightest chance of slipping from His hand.”** ■

# Assurance for Baptists

- You can see how *powerful* this idea would be for evangelism.
- All you have to do to “**save**” someone is bring them to a moment of genuine **faith**.
- If you can just get someone to *accept* Jesus as their Lord and Savior, then they are God’s and *God will never let them go* – even if they later lose their **faith**! ■

# Assurance for Baptists

- Now a **Baptist** will say in practice it does not really happen often – if ever – that someone who is saved will later lose their **faith**.
- But theoretically, if it did, they would *still* be saved. ■

# Assurance for Baptists

- The *anxiety* of a **Baptist** might be: did they really have a genuine, saving **faith** when they made “their decision” for Christ?
  - Was the moment of “decision” for Christ *genuine enough* that it truly “tattooed” them for salvation?
- If they have any doubt, it might be a good idea to respond to the altar call again, commit again to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, just in case ... ■

# Assurance for Baptists

- Generally, if one is saved, then you will manifest:
  - a continuing **faith**,
  - the *fruit* of a continuing **faith** – **good works**.
- Some **Baptists** will say **goods works** *always* naturally accompany a saving **faith**.
- Others insist that **good works** are *not* automatic and *not* necessary at all. ■

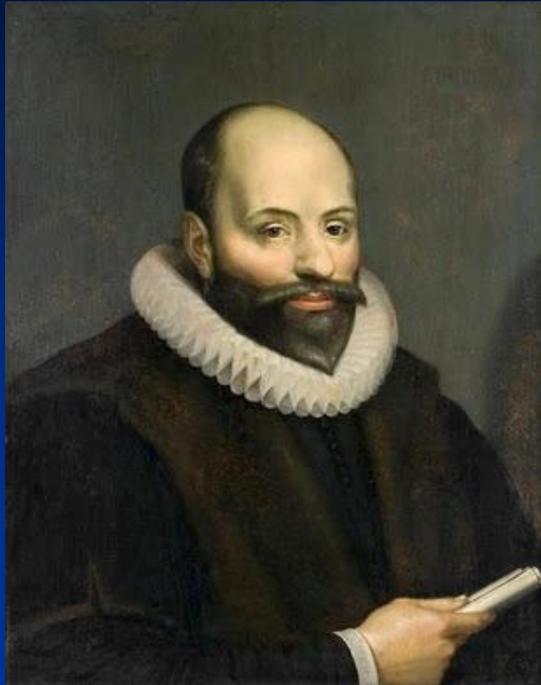
# Assurance for Baptists

- As justified, saved Christians, the **law** and the **commandments** are *instruction* (the so called **Third use of the law**) describing how we can slowly change our corrupted and darkened souls and become holier (more sanctified).
  - We can do this with help from God (grace)
  - We can do so confident we are already “justified” and hence saved.
    - That is: we are already externally cloaked by the radiant **righteousness of Christ** and guaranteed entrance into the heavenly banquet.
- **Sanctification** (becoming holy, changing internally) is a process involving obedience, a manifestation of our love for God, a free act – but it is *not necessary* to be saved. ■



# Assurance in Arminian Traditions (Reformed and Methodist)

# Assurance for Arminians



- **Jacobus Arminius** (1560-1609) thought the view of God implied by Calvinism was too harsh, and proposed a greater role for **human free will** in salvation.
- He taught God's grace is necessary for salvation, but we can choose:
  - to cooperate with God's grace, or
  - *not* to cooperate with God's grace; that is: to reject God's grace. ■

# Assurance for Arminians

- This idea of giving the **human free will** a role in salvation by allowing us the *freedom to cooperate* (or not) with God's grace is how most non-Calvinist Christian traditions strike a balance between:
  - **God's will** and **sovereignty**,
  - Our **human free will**. ■

# Assurance for Arminians

- Protestant Christians in the **Arminian** traditions (some **Reformed**, all **Methodists**) *explicitly reject* the high view of God's absolute sovereignty found in **Classical Calvinism**,
- They explicitly reject that God's absolute sovereignty means God predestines who will be **saved** and who will be **damned** *without* regard to human free will.
- They agree that **Original Sin** totally depraved our human nature, making it impossible for us to choose anything but evil.
- But God gives everyone a “**prevenient**” (“**preceding**”) **grace** that gives us the ability to choose or reject God's subsequent **saving / justifying grace**.
- If we accept God's saving / justifying grace, our response of **faith** will justify us and save us. We will be externally cloaked by the radiance of the **righteousness of Christ**. ■

# Assurance for Arminians

- All **Arminians** (includes **Methodists**, some **Reformed** Christians) hold, however, that people can *resist* God's saving grace.
- Divine grace does not function like a tsunami tidal wave, totally overwhelming the sinner's will in its wake.
- Rather, God's grace works through *persuasion*, influencing sinners, drawing them toward God, enabling them to respond in **faith**.
- When people respond in **faith** and repentance, it is truly their response, but it might have been otherwise. ■

# Assurance for Arminians

- If we have **faith**, we have **present assurance** that we **saved**:
  - if we were to die right now, we would go to heaven.
- However, although we can have a **present assurance** of salvation, we *cannot* have **permanent assurance** = **“Eternal Security;”** we can *never be sure* we will *persevere* to the end.
- Because God has given us the ability to reject his grace, we can *never rule out* the possibility that sometime in the future we *might* reject God and lose our **faith**. ■

# Assurance for Arminians

- But as long as we have a genuine **faith** based on:
  - 1. The “*internal* testimony” of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness within us that we are children of God: We feel a deep inner, joy or confidence or conviction that we are saved; and / or:
  - 2. “*External*” evidence. Do we have right beliefs? Do our lives manifest the “fruits” of the Spirit? Good works should follow “automatically” from a genuine faith,
- We know we are “justified” = externally cloaked with the radiance of **Christ’s righteousness**, and are assured of salvation if we were to die right now. ■

# Assurance for Arminians

- **Reformed** Arminians would agree with **Calvinists** in the Reformed tradition that as justified, saved Christians, the **law** and the **commandments** become *instruction* (the so called **Third use of the law**) on how we can slowly change our corrupted and darkened souls and become holier (= **sanctification**):
  - We can do this with help from God (grace).
  - We can do so confident we are already “justified” and hence **saved**.
    - That is: we are already externally cloaked by the radiant **righteousness of Christ** and guaranteed entrance into the heavenly banquet. ■

# Assurance for Arminians

- Wesleyan Arminianism (that is: **Methodism**) departs from Reformed Arminianism and from all the Churches of the Reformation in putting a major emphasis on growth in holiness or **sanctification**. ■

# Assurance for Arminians



- **John Wesley** (1703-1791), the founder of **Methodism**, agreed with all the churches of the Reformation that when we are justified by **faith**, we are externally cloaked with the radiance of **Christ's righteousness**.
- However *unlike* the other Churches of the Reformation, Wesley taught that when God *imputes* to us the *external* radiant **righteousness of Christ** that cloaks us, he also *implants* righteousness *internally* in our corrupted and darkened souls. ■

John Wesley, painting by George Romney

# Assurance for Arminians

- That is: when we are justified through **faith**:
  - We are externally “cloaked” with the **righteousness of Christ** (= we are **justified**) *and*,
  - We *begin* a growth in **holiness** with an initial *implantation* of righteousness inside us (**sanctification**). ■

# Assurance for Arminians

- **Sanctification** *first* involves the transformation of our wills and affections.
- One of the normal benefits of this early stage of sanctification is that the believer receives the gift of the **present assurance** of salvation.
- Then, *gradually* we come to love and desire that which God loves.
- Soon a desire for greater **sanctification** becomes a pursuit of ultimate joy.
- We do what is right and avoid what is evil because that is what our transformed wills *truly* desire. ■

# Assurance for Arminians

- The ultimate goal of sanctification is “**Entire Sanctification**” or “**Christian Perfection.**”
- **Christian Perfection** or **Entire Sanctification** is primarily the *perfection* of our love for God and for our neighbor:
  - The sanctifying power of God’s Spirit *invades* our beings and enables us to have *perfect love* for God and for our fellow human beings. ■

# Assurance for Arminians

- As we grow in holiness and Christlikeness through imparted righteousness, we will also be growing in a sensitivity to any movement *away* from God, in whatever form that movement may take.
- It is nonetheless always possible to fall from grace and ultimately lose our salvation. ■

# Assurance for Arminians

- Wesley taught there are two primary pathways that could result in a fall from grace:
  - unconfessed sin,
  - apostasy.
- Unconfessed sin is sin that is:
  - consciously held without repentance, and
  - continued without regret. ■

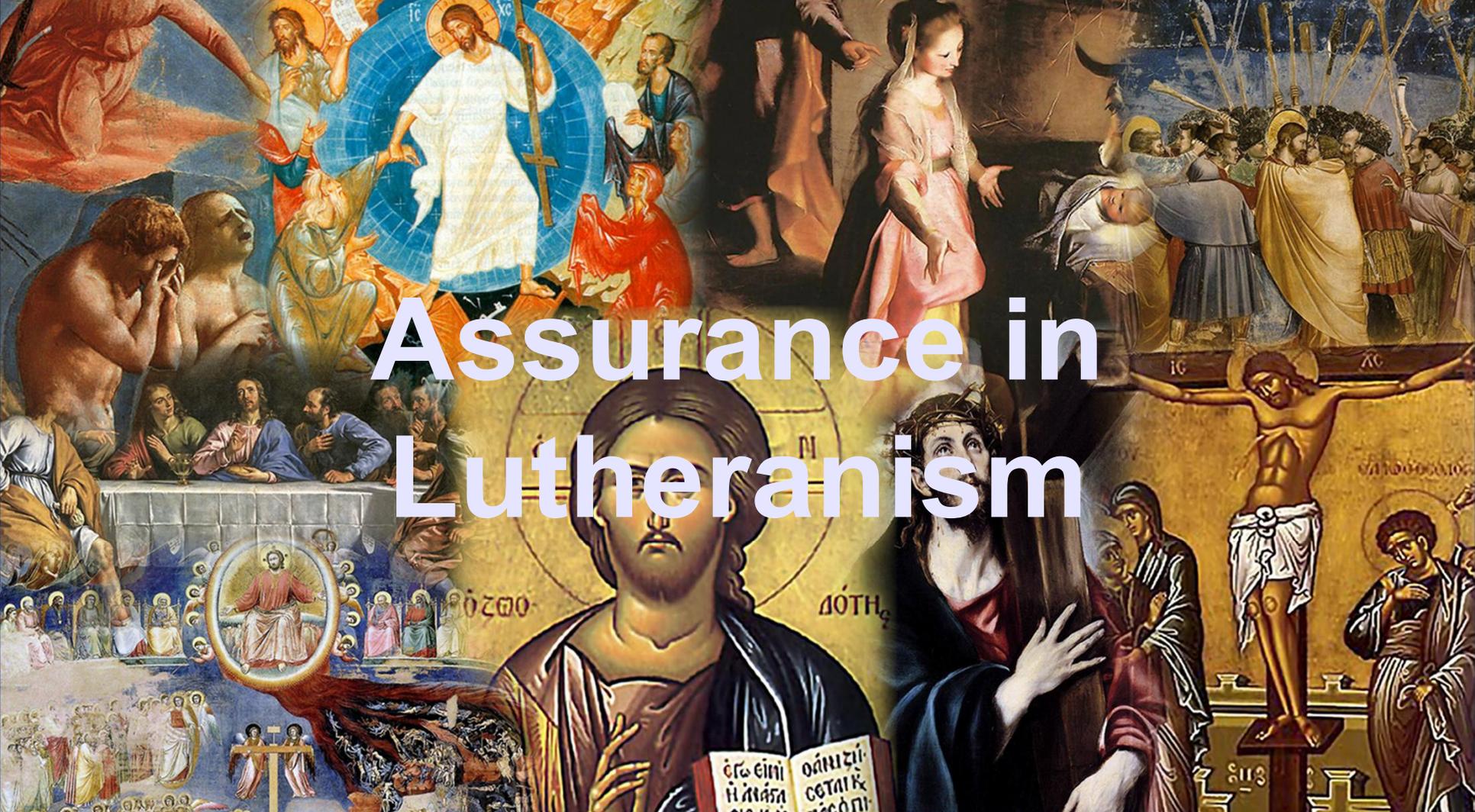
# Assurance for Arminians

- If we continue to yield in degrees to the temptation:
  - Sinning will begin to be more pleasing to us,
  - The Spirit will be grieved,
  - Our faith will be weakened,
  - Our love for God will cool.
- The Spirit will warn us more sharply, but we may persist in the downward spiral, turning further away to the point that we essentially resume a life of rebellion akin to that which we knew before we were born again. ■

# Assurance for Arminians

- Yet even when we fall *from* grace, we never fall *beyond* grace.
- We can always repent and be justified again.
  - Wesleyan Arminians (**Methodists**) teach we can recover even from apostasy
  - (In contrast, Reformed Arminians (some Reformed Churches and Baptists) teach that apostasy is a sin we can never recover from). ■

# Assurance in Lutheranism



# Assurance in Lutheranism

- **Lutheranism**, like Calvinism, teaches that through God's *irresistible grace*, we are given the gift of **faith**, a faith which justifies us = externally cloaking us, imputing to us the radiance of **Christ's righteousness**.
  - Unlike Calvinism, Lutheranism teaches the **irresistible grace** that causes us to be “born again,” become children of God, is given through **Baptism**. ■

# Assurance in Lutheranism

- **Lutheranism** also teaches **predestination**, that God has predestined who will be saved.
- Unlike Calvin, **Luther** (1483-1546) taught it is *not* for us to know if we are of **the elect**.
- Luther: “In my judgment, we must believe in the mercy of God, but remain uncertain about our and others’s future perseverance [in faith], or predestination. ... ‘if you think that you are standing, watch out that you do not fall,’” ■

# Assurance in Lutheranism

- But if we have **faith**, we have some **present assurance** we are saved.
- How do we know if we have a proper **faith**?
- In contrast to Calvinism, **Lutheranism** teaches we *cannot* determine whether we have a proper **faith** by looking *inside* ourselves for the internal testimony of the Spirit (that in fact would be the *wrong* place to look, creating only pride or false assurance or doubt). ■

# Assurance in Lutheranism

- A proper **faith**:
  - is anchored *externally* in God's Word and promises,
  - “grabs ahold” of the **gospel promise**, *trusting* in God's **mercy** and **promise** of salvation,
  - remembers over and over that Christ *died for me*.
- **Faith** for Luther is **trust in God's gospel promise**. ■

# Assurance in Lutheranism

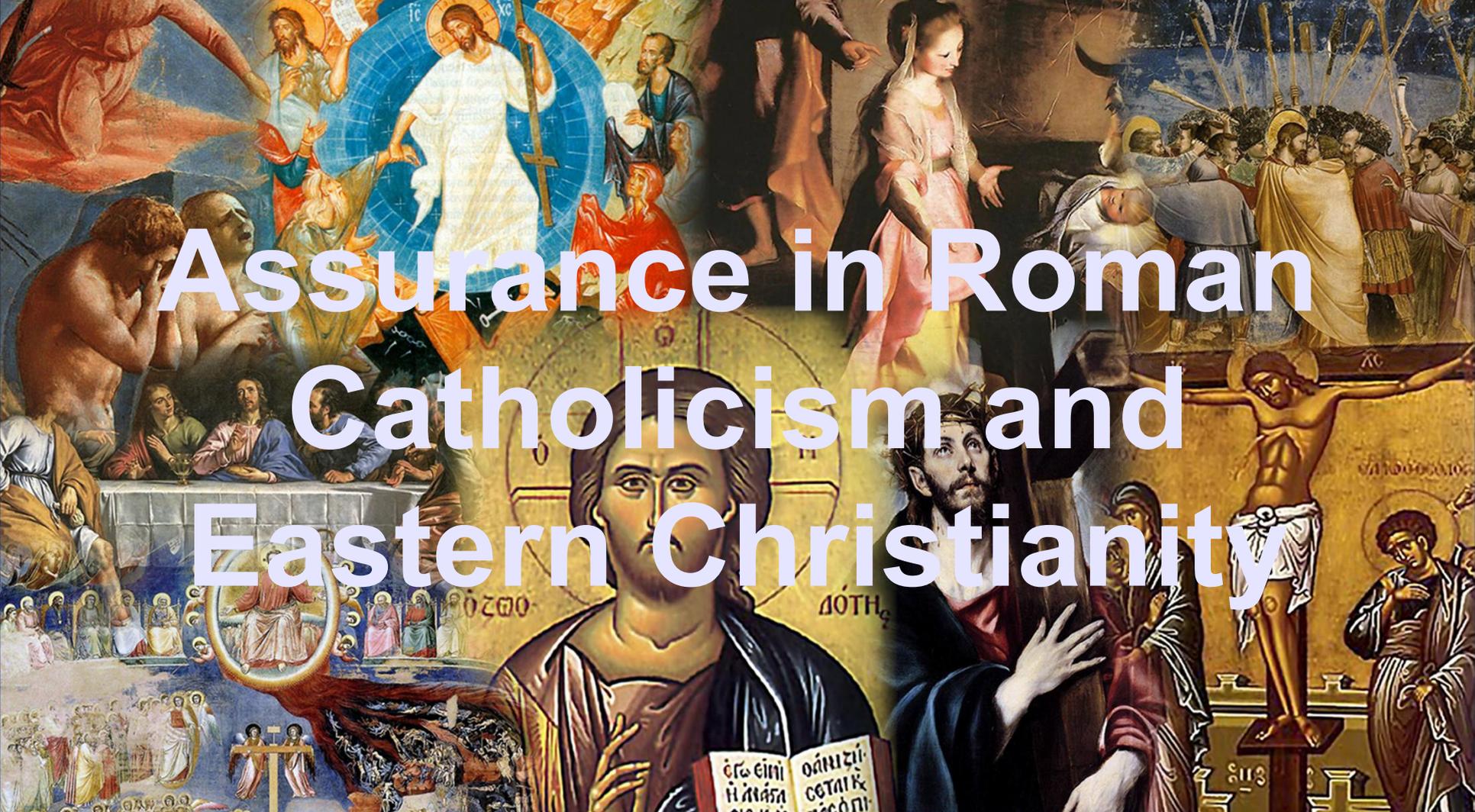
- **Lutheranism** says the *anxiety* we feel because of:
  - doubts,
  - concern our faith is too weak,
  - the uncertainty of our salvation,
- are *normal signs of faith*, not signs of unbelief, since the unbeliever has no concern or anxiety about doubts, faith or salvation. ■

# Assurance in Lutheranism

- **Luther** called such anxieties and terrors (which he frequently experienced himself) *Anfechtung*, German for “assault.”
  - They are *temptations* of the devil.
  - Their deepest form is the *worry* that the hidden God of predestination might be different from the revealed God of the promise.
- The only solution is to keep holding on to the **gospel promise**, the promise of our **Baptism**, remembering **Christ died *for me***. ■

# Assurance in Lutheranism

- The journey of life as a Christian is the *daily struggle* to believe, to trust, to “get used to” that **Gospel promise**, holding onto it, refusing to let go amid the assaults and terrors, the devil’s *Anfechtung*. ■



# Assurance in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Christianity

# Catholicism and the East

- Unlike the churches of the Reformation, in **Roman Catholicism** and **Eastern Orthodoxy** there is *neither*:
  - **eternal security** (assurance we will persevere to the end to our lives), or
  - assurance of salvation in the present (**present assurance**). ■

# Catholicism and the East

- In both churches, **salvation** is thought of as a *lifelong* process of *internal* transformation and change, a **journey**:
  - whose ultimate outcome *cannot* be known *until* the journey is completed,
  - whose “current status,” we can perhaps *guess* at with some approximate degree of accuracy; but *only* God alone knows. ■

# Catholicism and the East

- The key difference from the churches of the Reformation is that **Roman Catholic** and **Eastern Orthodox** Christianity teach we enter the “heavenly banquet” *not* on the basis of:
  - an external cloak of the radiance of **Christ’s righteousness**, a righteousness “imputed” to us in a single event of “justification,” associated with **faith**,
- but on the basis of:
  - the *actual* degree of holiness and righteousness within us, acquired through the grace of God over a lifetime, a lifetime full of:
    - fits and starts,
    - progress and backsliding,
    - spiritual success and failures. ■

# Catholicism and the East

- A pious Christian who believes in **Eternal Security** may confidently declare “I am saved” (= meaning he or she is confident they are externally cloaked with the radiance of **Christ’s righteousness**) and will *never* lose it.
- But a pious **Roman Catholic** or **Eastern Orthodox** Christian would be very reticent to make any declaration that he or she is definitely “saved.” (= meaning they have acquired an inner holiness and purity sufficient to stand before God and participate in the divine life). ■



# Discussion