

The Great Difference

1 John 3:10-15

Beloved congregation, when we examine the Epistle of the Apostle John, you will likely agree with the conclusion that there is much food for thought within that letter; a letter that covers all facets of the Christian faith and the life experiences that accompany it. Given the richness of its content, it is good to reflect on a portion of it together.

In this sermon we will consider the text words of 1 John. 3:10-15:

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. 11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him?

Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous. 13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. 14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. 15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”

The theme contained in these text words is: **The great difference**, and we will focus our attention on three main points:

Firstly: Child of God or Child of the Devil? (verse 10 and the verses prior).

Secondly: Devilish Hatred or Divine Love? (verses 11 through 13).

And thirdly: Came alive or remained dead? (verses 14 and 15).

The theme of the sermon is therefore: “The Great Difference” and there are three questions: (1) child of God or child of the devil?, (2) devilish hatred or divine love? and (3) came alive or remained dead?

1. Child of God or Child of the Devil?

Congregation, let us consider for a moment what we can read in chapter 2:18. Here we read a very moving and touching passage: *“Little children, it is the last hour.”* It is the last hour, the end times. Just a little while, and the final event will take place - the second coming of Jesus Christ. The footsteps of Jesus, we suggest, are already being heard in the signs of our times.

A disease like COVID-19 is one of those footsteps we hear before Jesus' second coming. He Himself has foretold that not only wars and rumors of wars, but also epidemics will increase. Who would have thought that the Covid virus would grip the whole world as it did? Moreover, there are many calamities such as forest fires, tsunamis and earthquakes. Lovelessness, cold hearts and individualism are also of the end times.

But doesn't this also apply in particular to anti-Christian thinking? This is perhaps one of the most heartrending things the apostle John sees, especially considering that such thinking emerges even within the Christian congregation. False teachers arise and say they are Christ, but they are, in reality, henchmen and heralds of the antichrist. That is staggering!

Therefore, John emphasizes the importance of being in Christ and abiding in Him. You will find that in 1 John. 2:24 to 29:

“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. 26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. 28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. 29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.”

Whoever abides in Christ Jesus, united to Him by true faith, will not be ashamed when He, the Lord Jesus, returns

to this earth. Then you need not be afraid, says John, because He will do what He has promised. He will then take His own into His eternal glory. They will be in the Father's house, sitting at the round table and eating the wedding supper. That rest will never end.

What a wonderful prospect that is: all tears will be wiped from our eyes. No one will say 'I am sick' anymore. The wolf and the lamb will be found side by side and small children will play with deadly snakes - yet they will no longer be dangerous.

Righteousness and peace will dwell in all the earth.

Jesus will not put us to shame when He returns. He will not say, "There is still so

much sin left in you, therefore you cannot enter." No, He promises that He will carry away all the sins of His children through His high priestly work, by virtue of His merit.

Congregation, this brings us to chapter 3 of John's first epistle. Do you realize, says John, how unspeakably rich you are when you are called a child of God? *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."* (1 John 3:1). It is an unfathomable and incomprehensible privilege to be a child of God. Yes, says John, then you are an heir of God's Kingdom. You inherit a treasure that is kept in heaven: eternal bliss and glory, peace with God, and that forever.

We also know that things can arise to oppose and challenge the children of God. What do we see here on earth regarding the King's children? They, too, experience illness and face troubles and worries, just like everyone else. Sometimes even more than others! Think of Asaph's lament in Psalm 73.

What do you actually see of that glory? 'Wait,' says John, 'let us not jump to conclusions too quickly.' *"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it is not yet revealed what we shall be"* (1 John 3:2). It is still hidden now, for there is still a curtain between you on earth and God in His glory. That curtain has yet to be pulled back. *"But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see Him as He is"* (1 John 3:2).

"We know," - that is the knowledge of faith, for we believe His Word. We believe in the resurrection of the body. John is speaking here of bodies that have drowned, bodies that have been buried, bodies that have decomposed. These are bodies devoid of glory.

The bodies of children of God, laid to rest in their tombs centuries ago, will rise again when Jesus returns and reveals Himself to them. As soon as they see Him, they will be like Him.

One of the Puritan fathers says, "When Jesus shall raise the dead on the last day, and in all His glory He shall gaze upon them with His divine eyes, at that time shall they be like unto Him." The souls of God's children go to the Father's house upon their passing. They are kept in His bosom. However, we must not forget that the body counts just as much. That body still awaits this glory.

'But,' says John, 'if you have that expectation and are an heir to the kingdom of God, you are indebted.' John says in verse 3: *"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"* (1 John 3:3). You cannot remain a sinner as you were before. When a change has come into your life, says John, it will become evident to others.

So, we come to our first point: child of God or child of the devil? John presents this contrast in a very stark manner: child of God or child of the devil. He must be honest with the congregation and so must we. We cannot say: 'It's all well with each of us, you can have a little of both....'. 'No', says John, 'That is exactly how it is': child of God OR child of the devil.'

Surely you know the response of the Jews when Jesus pointed out to them that they needed true repentance and faith in Him. They looked at Him with surprise and anger, saying: 'Who do you think you are? Do you know who we are? Are you not

mistaken? We are children of Abraham, God's chosen ones, we are Abraham's seed.

We have a place reserved in heaven with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

We honestly have earned that honor.'

Then Jesus replied: 'Abraham's children? Do you truly believe that you are children of Abraham? 'In no way do you resemble your father Abraham. Abraham eagerly awaited My coming, but you want to kill me! Why, you think you are Abraham's children, yet I am able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham!'

Jesus' response is intense and pointed. What is He saying? 'Your father? You call Abraham your father? Shall I tell you who your father is?' As you know, Jesus says this to outwardly respectable church people, to people who

didn't want to deviate an inch from God's law, who thought they were doing a very good job keeping it. Jesus says this to people who live with the Word: 'Your father is the devil!' Confusing, isn't it? How bewildering that must have been. 'Your father is the devil; you are the devil's child.' Jesus couldn't have said it any more pointedly.

Congregation, that is the great difference. Child of God or child of the devil. You might think this is going too far. A congregant once took exception when it was stated that: "By nature we all have become children of the devil." After the service, he questioned that assertion and asked, "How can you say that? It's not scriptural", to which the Minister replied: 'Then you don't know the Scriptures, because it is literally in the Bible.' It is the Word of the Son of God Himself: *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."* (John 8:44). Anyone who is not born again has Satan as his father. You are right when you say: 'But surely God remains our Creator? And by virtue of this creation, isn't He our Father?' Certainly, congregation, that is so, and God does not renounce that. Fortunately not. For this reason He gave His Son: *"For God so loved the world,..."* (John 3:16). The devil is called the prince of this world, and through our fall in our covenant head Adam, we have chosen him to rule over us and are under his dominion, and we have come to resemble Satan instead of God.

What was the great purpose of Adam and Eve in Paradise? It was to resemble God, for He created them in His own image and likeness. But who did they become? Like the devil. They began to distrust God and rather believed the lie of the devil.

In verse 10 we read: *"In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest..."* It is as though John says, "Now I could give you many marks that distinguish a child of God from a child of the devil".

In the Canons of Dort we find the characteristics of a child of God.

You recognise a child of God by his love for God, His service and His commandments. They show sorrow for their sins, and hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Children of God love the Word of God, for in it they find nourishment for their souls. Seeking the kingdom of God has become the priority of their lives.

But the apostle John does not mention any of these things. He takes one aspect and underlines it. He draws attention to it because it is so important, and perhaps also because it is sometimes so forgotten.

For this is an important mark of being a child of God, as we read in Verse 10: *"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."*

So here the characteristic of love is specifically mentioned. This brings us to our second point:

2. Devilish Hatred or Divine Love?

Love is a very important theme in the first Epistle of John. It is also a recurring theme in the preaching of Jesus. Where love dwells, as we sing in Psalter 371, "The Lord commands His blessing there – in life that is unending." It is about the heart. Let's read verses 11 and 12 again: *"For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."*

Congregation, what did the Lord command us in paradise? Very simple: love, vertically directed to God, and horizontally directed to one another. Adam and Eve exercised this love – it is unclear for how long.....some say only a week - but they sang: "O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all my days." They did things out of love for God. They did this submissively, without any other sought alternative.

Why? Because we love Him. When we can do something for someone we love, we feel joyful. Because we love Him. It's an act of love. It's a natural thing, isn't it? It's normal to do things for our family members, like parents wanting to do things for their children, or siblings for each other.

So that's the root: what is done out of love is not a duty that we do just because we are obliged to do so. God does not employ slaves. Adam and Eve were not slaves, no, they served God voluntarily. God, speaking with reverence, didn't want them to be tied to a string and to respond only when He pulled it. No, it wasn't like that.

God wanted them to serve Him willingly, but also to love one another willingly. We must not forget the horizontal side, the love for one another.

After the Fall, you can see immediately how things went wrong. Adam rebels

against God. In fact, he stands before the Lord with a clenched fist: "Thou gavest me this woman! She seduced me." How unloving Adam was to the Lord, but also to Eve. How hurt she must have felt. 'Adam, am I no longer worth anything to you? Would you rather not have me?' Congregation, please never say such a thing, even if you have a serious argument. Don't ever say, "I should never have married you."

Lack of love came through the fall. John mentions Cain and his brother Abel. The Cains wear the image of Satan with vigour or enthusiasm. The Abels, on the other hand, serve God with their hearts because they have been made alive by the Lord. Abel's works are righteous. The Lord looks at his heart, as it says in Genesis. When he and Cain offer their sacrifices, Abel's offering is accepted. As children many of us thought the smoke from his sacrifice went straight up, as we read in children's Bible. We do not know if it really happened exactly in that way, but it is clear that in some way God demonstrated his acceptance of Abel's offering and His rejection of Cain's offering.

It also is repeated in two ways in the epistle to the Hebrews: *"By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained a witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaks"* (Heb 11:4). It is about the heart of Cain and the heart of Abel. Cain showed his true nature. His hatred of God and of what pertains to God was revealed.

Do not forget that Cain was also raised properly by Adam and Eve. This is evident from the fact that he also wanted to bring a thank offering. Outwardly he participates, but his heart is full of poison. He hates God and he hates the child of God. He has been harassing his brother Abel for a long time. It says that he was actually looking for an opportunity to kill his brother. It wasn't just any murder. It literally says that he "butchered" him. There lies Abel, horribly mutilated... and Cain walks away.

"Oh", says John, "the world has become a world of Cains and Abels". We see it in the descendants of Cain. Hear Lamech roar, "I will kill anyone who as much as scratches me". All this happens just before the flood. God sees the anger in the hearts of the

people reaching a climax. Then God says, "I can't bear this generation of Cains any longer. I'm going to cleanse the earth. We read in Genesis 6:7: *7 "And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."*

It is different with Noah, in his life God sees His own work. Noah loves God; it is evident in his works. Noah is willing to work on an ark for 120 years, even though he doesn't really know what the ark is for and how it will all unfold. Yet he is faithful when people laugh at him. 'Noah, what are you doing? Building a big boat, an ark, on dry land? How foolish!' But Noah loves God and also loves his neighbour, because this ark is for the preservation of people and animals. Congregation, this distinction comes up again and again. Where the Lord is at work, there is love to God and love to neighbours. Who does not think of Abraham? When the Lord tells Abraham that the sin of Sodom has reached a climax and that Sodom will be destroyed by divine judgment... What does Abraham do? Does he say: "Good for these wicked people, Lot should never have lived there"? No, on the contrary. What does Abraham do? He goes to negotiate with the Lord. "Lord, if I have received grace in Thy sight, then will not Thou listen to me? Lord, wilt thou spare the city when there are still 50 righteous in the city?" "Yes Abraham." But Abraham is still not at ease: "Lord, if there are fewer, if there are 45 or 40 or 30... 20 or just 10?" What love he has for his neighbour. This is brotherly love, because Abraham does not want Lot and his family to perish. Meanwhile, God is already busy saving Lot. His angels rushed ahead and dragged Lot, his wife and daughters out of their house and sent them out of the city.

Love... Isn't that what the disciples showed by bringing each other to Jesus? Isn't that what caring people do, like the four friends who carried their paralyzed friend to Jesus? Wasn't this the commandment that Jesus continually repeated *"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"* (John 13:34)?

This was, as it were, a new commandment which at the same time was an old commandment which was valid from the beginning. But Jesus actually says: "I will renew it once more, with Me as the great example. That you will love one another and not be busy being 'masters' over one another. No, serve each other through love."

Devilish hatred or Divine love: this is the constant refrain in John's letter, also in the letter of James by the way. Are these works of love expressed by you and in your life? Have you loved your neighbor as yourself, and God above men and above yourself? That is the key question, congregation: to love, not with nice words, but with deeds. Only by way of deeds do we know whether someone has actually passed on to a virtuous life. Then we hear someone ask Jesus, "Who then is my neighbor?" "Who is your neighbor?" replies Jesus. "Do you find that difficult?" Indeed, you can't just board a plane and go to a very poor country and do all sorts of good things there. No. The Lord Jesus says, "Look around you. Just stay close to home. That is where your primary calling lies."

To make this clear, the Lord Jesus tells the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan. Congregation, where was the Levite when he noticed the wounded man? Where was the priest? Where did the Samaritan find him? Simply on the road along which they all walked. They didn't have to make a detour, they just had to stop, just as Jesus dwelt with the lepers, the blind, the lame, the weary and the burdened whom He met on His way through the land.

There is Bartimaeus crying: Jesus, Thou Son of David! have mercy on me (Mark 10:46). There was the Canaanite woman who says, *"Have mercy on me, Oh Lord! Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."* (Matthew 15: 22). There was also a tax collector who climbed a tree in Jericho because he wanted to see Jesus. *"Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house"* (Luke 19:5).

Remember your neighbor, in deed and in the Word, and also in material ways. Give love in all kinds of ways. And just pray: 'Lord, just let me be meaningful for the people that cross my path.' Do not immediately think of doing big things. We tend to want to save the whole world. That in itself is a good sign, but Jesus alludes to a glass of cold water: *"Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, so did you to me"* (Matt. 25:40). When the Lord Jesus starts so small, it can encourage us to want to live like that. A word at the right time and sprinkled with salt – that is made pleasant – to give to my neighbor. And, if necessary, to underline this with deeds.

That is how we should treat our neighbor, whether close by, in the congregation or beyond. That is why verse 13 of our text speaks of 'brethren'. You hear it again and again in this letter, that the apostle John says: 'beloved' and 'children of God' and 'little children'. And he also speaks of 'brothers'.

What does Jesus say to His brothers? Do not marvel, my brothers, sisters. *"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."* 'Look', says the apostle, 'you must not forget, Christians, that the world of Cains and Abels will remain for the time being until Jesus returns. Do not be surprised because it might tempt you to doubt God's existence, and begin to doubt the words that God Himself has spoken.' John calls us to not doubt the words of God: *"Marvel not."*

Jesus said it many times, 'They have hated Me; they will hate you also.' 'They persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.' 'A servant is not greater than his lord.'

'Tribulation, persecution and trouble shall await you in this life. Blessed are they that are persecuted.' Marvel not if the world hates you.

Hate. Do not immediately think of the deepest form of hatred, just think of despising, rejecting, and ignoring. People who serve the Lord can be despised in all sorts of ways. You don't have to take these people completely seriously, do you? Don't be surprised...

The worst persecutions were the persecutions of Christians. Think of the time of John. He speaks to people who might soon be burning like torches in Nero's garden.

People who will be thrown into the arenas, torn apart by lions and bears, people who will be roasted alive. To those who see their children murdered and their wives raped before their eyes. To these people John says here: do not marvel or doubt.

For it is according to the word of Christ: Satan's hatred has not changed. John saw that on Patmos. He saw how the dragon does everything he can to destroy the Church here on earth. But he won't succeed. *"And her child was caught up to God and His throne."* (Rev.12:5). The Child Jesus has been taken up into heaven. But the Church, the

mother of the Child, is persecuted by Satan.

Congregation, we should not be surprised if we read in the newspapers that missionaries have been murdered in cold blood, if churches are burned down, if Christians are imprisoned in concentration camps... don't be surprised.

We should rather be surprised that it is actually still so relatively 'quiet' here. That we may still be allowed to enjoy relative peace in our country. But let us certainly also be prepared to face changes. Intolerance is growing more and more; we should see that in this light. It really won't be long before our schools will no longer be allowed to defend 'divergent' opinions, where a Pastor or parent may no longer say that the Lord intended marriage to be between one man and one woman, as an example of Christ and His Church. Don't be surprised.

A pastor in Germany was suspended for these statements and denounced by his own colleagues. He might have expressed himself a little more diplomatically, but remember, the hatred of God's adversaries is behind it. They are the opponents who think: 'Our standard exceeds everything!' And everyone should obey that, they think. Do not marvel if the world hates you.

We will move on to our last point, but first let's sing from **Psalter 426:1,3,4**: about the redemption in which the psalmist also wants others to share.

3. Came alive or remained dead?

Congregation, this is about the works, as you will understand. Our catechism teaches that in Lord's Day 33, question and answer 90. Let's turn there together. It speaks of the quickening of the new man, *"and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works."* Also look at the The Belgic Confession of Faith where it speaks in article 24 about the new man.

So John speaks here also of the new life, which is expressed in your conduct, but especially in your deeds of love. You begin to love your neighbor as yourself and are also willing to make sacrifices for this. As God loved man: *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins"* (1 John

4:10). True love is sacrificial and redemptive, not what the world calls true love, but it is rather sacrificial and redemptive. That's what God did, out of love for people! That is why John also continues: *"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another"* (1 John 4:11). He says, in effect: 'There is no other way. He who loves God also loves his neighbor and in that respect also wants to resemble the Lord, in His giving, sacrificial, redeeming love.'

Then you are also willing to say 'no' to voices in your life that want to achieve the opposite. It doesn't all happen by itself or automatically. There are times when you have to struggle to do good and not to do evil. I am thinking of the apostle Paul's struggle: *"When I would do good, then evil is with me"* (Rom.7:21). He does not say, "So I will do evil." No, he just wants to say, 'They are so close together. "Every time again I *need* the grace of God, the power of Christ to do what is right...to live holily.'" One of the Puritan preachers put it like this: 'I don't know what I'm going to thank the Lord Jesus most for: for His justification or for His sanctification.' He is simply saying, "I need Him daily in sanctification, to become like Him."

There's so much going on. The flesh, that is dying is still alive, still active. And the devil goes about to seduce, to influence and to destroy. And the sinful world pulls at us. So the new life is certainly not without struggle. You are not perfect in yourself, but you are perfect in Christ. The new life means that you have passed from death unto life. Read again the verses 14 and 15 of our text: *"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."*

Here you see that someone has either passed on to life or remains dead. John says: 'We know...'. Here he addresses the children of God, also the least in grace and also the lambs. 'We know...'. That is knowledge of faith as in Lord's Day 7 it also says: 'we know' and 'we trust'.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life." How can you know? Do you want to know whether you have been made alive or not? Do you test yourself by the

marks of men made alive given in God's Word? Do you dare?

The Canons of Dordt speak of "perceiving in oneself with spiritual joy the fruits: true faith in Christ, filial fear of God, godly sorrow for sin, and hunger and thirst for righteousness." This also includes brotherly love, love for one's neighbor. Ruth said, "Thy God is my God," but also, "Thy people are my people." She wants to belong to that people, because they are a people loved by God. You notice it in the life of that other person. You want to be part of that, because there is a bond. John and Peter both knew they had so many shortcomings and limitations. John could have said, "Simon Peter, you denied Him. I'm not taking you in." But then we read that they were together in one house after the crucifixion of Jesus.

John takes pity on Peter, knowing full well what Peter had done. And together they go to the tomb in the garden. What brotherly love!

John was not above Peter. Not even above Mary Magdalene. And Mary Magdalene not above Peter. She even goes to Peter first to tell him that the Lord Jesus is no longer in the tomb. That is brotherly love. Brotherly love in word and deed. When Barnabas hears that there is a need in the church, he says, 'I have a field. I can sell it. I can't bear to see someone from the congregation being sold into slavery.' And he sells the field and gives the money to the poor members of the congregation. Now that is brotherly love in action.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life."

Do you know what is an important aspect of the assurance of faith? You can read it in the Canons of Dordt, the fifth head, article 10. It deals with the question from which you can deduce whether or not you are chosen: 'This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to or independent of the Word of God, but springs from faith in God's promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort.'

That is paramount: believing in God's promises. *"Come then, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isa. 1:18). *"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"* (John 6:37). Those are promises from God. The Bible is full of these. Do you believe them? Do you take them for granted? Do you entrust yourself to the Lord and say, 'I hope in those promises. In the verity of those promises I cast the anchor of my soul.'

That's the first thing. But then it says further in the Canons of Dort: ".....from the testimony of the Holy Spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are children and heirs of God (Rom. 8:16).'

That is the inner work of the Holy Spirit, Who whispers in your heart by applying the Word, 'It's not just for others. It's also for you, verily, for you.' The Holy Spirit makes it personal. So then, we must not grieve him, because then He will no longer testify. When David fell into sin, the Holy Spirit became silent.

And then the Canons of Dordt continue: ".....and lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort that they shall finally obtain the victory, and of this infallible pledge of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable."

See how this is fully Biblical? It comes from God's Word. The authors of the Canons of Dordt have John and also the Lord Jesus Himself supporting them. You are known by the fruits. If you are constantly polluting your conscience by sinning and doing wrong things, you will have little assurance. When David fell into sin, he really didn't have much assurance. When he wrote Psalm 23, yes, then he had assurance. When Peter denied the Lord Jesus, he felt no assurance at all. But when he stood testifying on the day of Pentecost, then he lived with assurance.

Good works. The Lord does not say, "Do good works, and you will merit it." No, not that. But He does say, "When you receive the Holy Spirit you will do good works." You receive the Holy Spirit and by those works God bears witness that you are on the narrow way. That you belong to Him; that you resemble God's Son more and more. Because, congregation, in the works we do out of love, we become like Jesus. Calvin says: 'Then His children become His hands, they become His feet, they become His ears and eyes.'

“Inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, thou hast done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40).

Amen.

Closing Psalter 426: 9, 10