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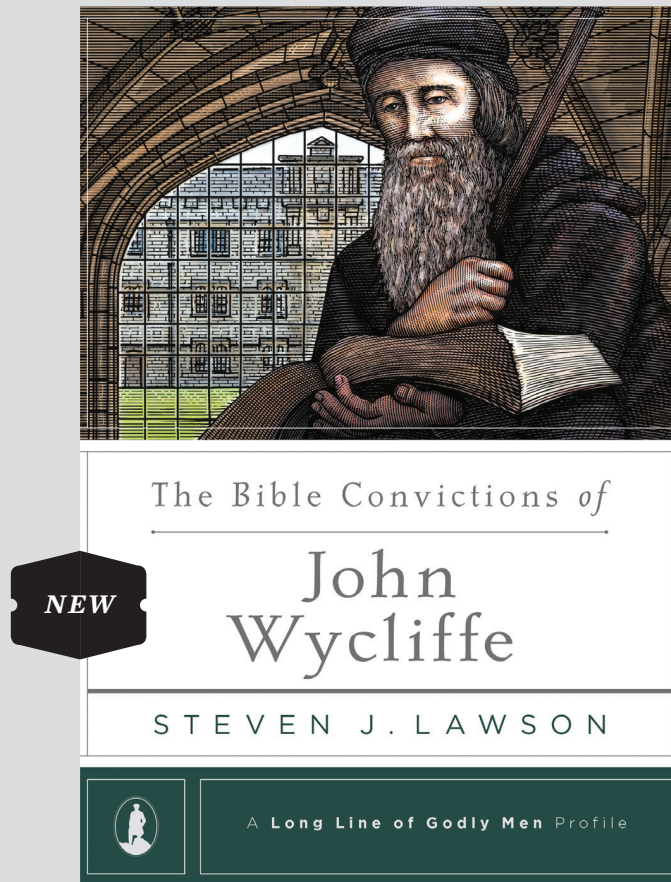
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# SECURE IN THE LORD

DR. STEVEN J. LAWSON, PRESIDENT, ONEPASSION MINISTRIES



I became a believer in Jesus Christ when I was seventeen years old. I knew enough gospel truth to be saved, but not enough to know that I was eternally secure in Christ. As I attended high school, I lived with the realization that I knew that I was converted to Christ, but that most of my friends were not. As I pondered this reality, I also thought, “What if, at the end of my life, they are converted, but I return to an unconverted state?” That thought haunted me as I considered the future. I was saved as a teenager, but would I be in in the end?

In my early twenties, I distinctly remember hearing a two-part sermon on the eternal security of the believer. It was delivered by a powerful preacher named Adrian Rogers. He gave ten biblical reasons to believe in this doctrine. Five were given in the Sunday morning service, and the last five in the evening.

Sitting under those sermons was a decisive moment in my young Christian life. I came to see from Scripture that my salvation was secure in the Lord Jesus Christ. This meant that I was as certain for heaven that moment as if I had already been there ten thousand years. When I would come to the end of my life, I would have the assurance that I would step into the immediate presence of God with full acceptance.

You and I must preach this same truth to those who hear us. It will bring great comfort to those who are genuinely converted, as it gives the assurance of everlasting hope. May this issue on the perseverance of the saints and their eternal security encourage you to preach this glorious truth with increasing knowledge, gratitude, and confidence. ♦



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# PREACHING PRESERVING GRACE

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STEVEN J. LAWSON

**A**s we come to the final doctrine of grace in this series, our present focus is upon preaching the perseverance of the saints. This is the capstone truth of the sovereign grace of God in the salvation of sinners. What began in eternity past with the election of God the Father was continued two thousand years ago with the definite atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ. This saving work continues daily with the effectual calling of each of the elect to faith in Christ. Finally, this work of grace will be brought to completion by God in securing the salvation of every believer throughout time into eternity future.

Without this core doctrine of God's preserving grace, everything that He has previously accomplished would be for naught. Apart from this truth, sovereign election would be nullified. Without this reality, definite atonement would be canceled out. Without this teaching, effectual grace would be reversed. However, because of this grand doctrine, the salvation that God began before the foundation of the world is a lasting work that will endure throughout the ages to come. From eternity past to eternity future, none of the elect will fall from grace. None for whom Christ died will ever perish. None whom the Spirit regenerates will ever fail to be glorified.

Certain hard questions need to be raised: Can a follower

of Jesus Christ ever fall away from grace? Can a believer become an unbeliever? Can a Christian show no evidence of fruit in his life? The answers to these provocative questions are the same. Each receives the firm response of a resounding no. Any failure on God's part to save forever is utterly impossible. This fifth and final doctrine of grace successfully completes the survey of the saving work of God. None who are saved will ever relapse into being unsaved. No sinner who is found by Christ will ever be lost—not now, not ever.

This important doctrine of the preserving grace of God must be preached from every pulpit. This truth brings comfort to every converted believer, stressing that God will complete the work He has begun. Christ will never walk away from one of His sheep. He will never allow one of His followers to slip through His fingers and perish eternally.

Due to the vast number of verses that teach this truth, it will be impossible in this limited space to address every one of them. Therefore, we cannot examine every nuance that supports this doctrine. However, the main texts will be explored, and major arguments will be explained, in order to establish this case.

## **EXPLAIN THE DOCTRINE**

To begin, you must clearly state what this truth is. The

persevering grace of God includes a twofold aspect in the life of a believer. First, this sanctifying work of God causes every believer to pursue holiness throughout his or her Christian life. Second, this securing work of God ensured that believers are held eternally by God in His omnipotent hands. They will never fall away from His saving grace. Both of these aspects—the perseverance of the saints (sanctifying them) and their eternal security (securing them)—are a vital part of this doctrinal truth.

### ***Ongoing Sanctification of Believers***

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints teaches that every true believer will persevere in his life-pursuit of following Christ and becoming like Him. The apostle John writes, “Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints” (Rev 13:10). The word “perseverance” (*hupomonē*) is a compound word that means “remaining under.” The main root word is *monē*, which means “remaining or abiding in a specific place.” The prefix *hupo* means “being under.” The combination of these two words conveys the idea of a person enduring under something. In the case of believers, it describes the reality that they will continue with steadfastness in living for Christ throughout the whole of their Christian lives.

In Revelation 13:10, both of these two elements—“perseverance” and “faith”—are inseparably joined. Saving faith will always evidence itself in persevering faith. True faith will always persevere—it will always believe in Jesus Christ and always follow Him. Faith is the gift of God, given to the elect when they are regenerated (Eph 2:8–9; Phil 1:29; Heb 12:2; 2 Pet 1:1). The faith He bestows is a steadfast faith that keeps on looking to Christ and trusting in Him. John repeats this same truth: “Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus” (Rev 14:12). Again, perseverance and faith are welded together, along with obedience.

### ***Persevering in Obedience and Faith***

This means that every saint will persevere in obedience to God and in having faith in Jesus Christ. This does not mean that the saints will never disobey the Lord. Every Christian will commit individual acts of sin. The best of saints still do fall into sin (see Ps 32:3–5; Rom 7:14–26). But in the big picture of a believer’s life, there will be the consistent pattern of a habitual lifestyle of obeying God’s Word. For the one who is born again, His commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:3). The indwelling Holy Spirit creates a sincere desire to keep the requirements of Scripture. This does not mean there will be the perfection of one’s life, but the new direction of it.

Regardless of the fiery trials Christians will encounter, they will continue in their obedient faith. Their faith may weaken and falter, but they will never stop believing. Even in the face of great persecution, they will continue trusting Christ and obeying God’s words. What God has joined together—perseverance, obedience, and faith—let no one put asunder. There will be an endurance in maintaining one’s faith in the Lord, even in the face of life-threatening difficulties. Even the threat of tribulation and martyrdom will not cause a believer to withdraw his personal commitment to Christ.

### ***Eternal Security of Believers***

There is a second aspect of preserving grace which we must consider. This additional component is called the eternal security of the believer, which means that every true believer will never fall away from saving grace. It teaches that everyone who is born again will never be removed from the family of God. Everyone who is justified by faith will be safely transported to heaven at the moment of death. The pithy statement “once said, always saved” is sound doctrine. No child of God will ever lose his salvation. He will be forever kept secure in the Lord’s saving hands, never to

**What God has joined together—  
perseverance, obedience, and  
faith—let no one put asunder.**



perish eternally.

One's salvation is kept the same way it is received. It is received by grace, apart from any human merit. Therefore, it is preserved in exactly the same way: namely, by grace. There is nothing that believers can do to keep themselves saved in their personal relationship with God. The eternal security of the believer is not a matter of anyone holding onto Christ. Rather, it is found in Christ holding onto the believer. Though our faith will weaken, His grip on us will never loosen nor release us.

### **EMPHASIZE ETERNAL LIFE**

Every believer is distinguished as one who will receive eternal life. John teaches, "Whoever believes will in Him have eternal life" (John 3:15). These two words, "eternal life," describe the new quality of life that every believer receives in Jesus Christ. "Eternal life" (*aiōnios zōē*) refers to the spiritual life that belongs to the ages to come. It points to the supernatural life that pertains to any entirely another realm in heaven. This new life is the life of God received in the previously dead soul of a sinner. This heavenly life presently belongs to the believer while he is living an earthly existence. It is the eternal life of God that comes down from another sphere to fill and flood the human soul.

#### ***An Unending Life with God***

This expression "eternal life" describes not only the new quality of divine life that belongs to a believer, but also its unending duration. "Eternal life" speaks of life that will exist throughout the endless eternity to come. It describes the life that is perpetual in its longevity, that endures throughout eternity future. This new spiritual life will never stop existing in a person once it is received. It can never cease within time, nor within eternity. An unending future with God is secured the moment a person believes in Jesus Christ.

The promise of eternal life is taught throughout the Scripture. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Whenever someone believes in Jesus Christ, the free gift of eternal life is immediately given. That person does not have to wait to possess this divine life at some later point in the future. He does not receive it only once he reaches some higher level of spiritual maturity. Neither does he receive it when he passes from this world into the one to come. Instead, a believer is given eternal life the very moment he believes. John the Baptist reinforced this: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life" (John 3:36). The one who believes immediately "has" eternal life.

#### ***A Present Possession***

Adding weight to this argument, Jesus said, "He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent me, has eternal life" (John 5:24). Christ states that the possession of eternal life begins now, the moment one believes. He states this in the present tense, with the verb "has." This word (*echō*) means "to have hold of something in the hand." It refers to holding fast to an object. In this case, the possession is eternal life. The moment one believes in Jesus Christ, he immediately receives eternal life. He does not receive this divine life when he enters into heaven. Instead, he instantly receives it the exact moment he believes in Jesus Christ. If a person does not have eternal life in this life, he will never have it in the life to come.

Once more, Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47). Again, the Lord said, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life" (John 6:54). To His sheep, Jesus promised, "I give eternal life to them" (John 10:28). A truth in the Bible only needs to be stated once in order for it to be accepted. But when the same statement is made multiple times in the Scriptures, this repetition is intended to grab our attention and underscore the teaching's importance. That is certainly the case with "eternal life" being described as the present possession of every believer. Therefore, the salvation of every individual who puts his or her trust in Jesus Christ is secured for all eternity.

### **EMPHASIZE THE GOOD SHEPHERD**

As the great Teacher of sound doctrine, Jesus taught that "[the] shepherd of the sheep...calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ... The sheep follow him because they know his voice" (John 10:2-4). Jesus is this "good shepherd" (vv. 11, 14) who calls His sheep. When He effectually summons them, they immediately follow Him. He leads them out of apostate, dead religion, never to return to its deceptive lies. For the rest of their days, they will pursue Him, being drawn by His sovereign voice.

#### ***Forsaking the False Shepherds***

To this allegory, Jesus adds, "A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers" (v. 5). The sheep simply will not follow the seductive lure of another shepherd. They will abandon a false prophet who teaches a false gospel. "Strangers" is in the plural, indicating there are many false spiritual leaders in the world. They will not follow the pope nor worship Mary. Neither will they follow a prosperity gospel preacher in his greed. They will turn a deaf ear to Muhammad. They

will shun Brigham Young. They will not give attention to cult leaders, who are “thieves and robbers” (v. 8).

These false religious leaders are intent to “steal and kill and destroy” (v. 10). They “steal” glory from God as they “kill and destroy” the souls of men. Such charlatans are “hired hand[s]” who have no love for the sheep. When they see “the wolf coming,” they leave the sheep and flee (v. 12), because they care only for their own wellbeing and not for the sheep. A twofold rejection takes place, as the sheep, who belong to God, will forsake the false shepherd, and the false shepherd will abandon them. Never will they remain together in close association.

### ***Following the True Shepherd***

At the Feast of Dedication that follows, Jesus states, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:27). To “follow” Christ means to heed His counsel and obey His word. It involves imitating His manner of life—that is, walking as He walked (1 John 2:6). It includes believing the truth that He taught and being conformed into His image. To “follow” Christ necessitates denying self, taking up one’s cross, and pursuing Christ (Matt 16:24). This is the reality of the perseverance of the sheep in pursuing their shepherd.

Concerning the safety of His sheep, Jesus adds, “They will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28). Christ’s sheep will never suffer the agonizing torment of eternal hell. This is because He holds them secure in His hand. Salvation is not a matter of any believers holding onto Christ, but of Christ holding onto them. Divine grace will never let go of them, not in this life nor in the life to come. Further, Jesus states, “My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (v. 29). Here, Jesus stresses that His sheep are doubly secure, as they are held not only in His hand, but also in the hand of the Father.

## **EXPOUND THE GOLDEN CHAIN**

The Apostle Paul likewise teaches the same truth, that the final salvation of believers rests with the sovereignty of God, not the ability of man. Paul writes, “For those whom [God] foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son . . . and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified” (Rom 8:29). This is known as the “golden chain” of salvation, comprising five unbreakable links. Those whom God foreknew in eternity past are the same ones who will be glorified in eternity future. No one is added along the

way, nor are there any dropouts.

### ***Foreknowledge to Glorification***

When Paul addresses “those whom He foreknew” (v. 29), he refers to those whom God the Father chose in eternity past to save with a redeeming love and supreme devotion. These were foreordained to be the chosen bride of His Son, Jesus Christ. They were given to the Son before the foundation of the world (John 6:37, 39; 10:28; 17:2, 6, 9, 24). Once chosen and entrusted to Him, they were “predestined to become conformed to the image of [God’s] Son” (v. 29). The biblical truth of predestination means that the salvation of the elect is immutable and irrevocable—and therefore inevitable.

Moreover, the final outcome of these chosen ones is made certain: they will “become conformed to the image of His Son” (v. 29). This process begins progressively in their daily sanctification and will consummate in their ultimate glorification. Paul explains that these whom He predestined, He also calls, justifies, and glorifies (v. 30). To be “glorified” is to be in the immediate presence of Christ, fully conformed to His likeness as much as a redeemed creature can be. On that day, every believer will have a glorified body and spirit, free from any trace of sin.

### ***An Unbroken Chain***

What is obviously apparent in this golden chain of salvation, composed of these five links, is that it is unbreakable. At no point in this *ordo salutis* (Latin for “the order of salvation”) does this chain break such that those who were foreknown by God fall away from His grace. Everyone whom God predestined to be saved before the foundation of the world will be with God in heaven forever. No one chosen by God before time began will be allowed to drop out within time. These links are infallibly connected stages of salvation that guarantee the final glorification of all those foreknown and predestined by God.

From this passage in Romans, the truth of the eternal security of all believers must be preached. This will require exegetical skill and theological precision. Every seemingly unclear text of Scripture must be brought into close alignment with this cornerstone passage. These verses are so unmistakably clear that it is a wonder that anyone could miss the logic of the airtight case that Paul makes here. Here is the golden chain of salvation that anchors every believer to Jesus Christ forever.

## **EXEGETE THE SPIRIT’S WORK**

In keeping with the previously stated truths, the Apostle Paul teaches that all believers are permanently sealed by

the Holy Spirit in Christ, never to be removed from Him. He writes, “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13). What Paul maintains in this passage is we must preach the eternal security of the believer with conviction to our congregation.

### ***Sealed in Jesus Christ***

Whenever anyone believes in Jesus Christ, Paul states that the individual is immediately “sealed” in the Lord Jesus Christ. The word “sealed” (*sphragizō*) means to secure something for safekeeping. This sealing to which Paul refers is a mark of divine ownership, much like what would be placed on the official document of a king. It signified that the contents were unalterable, being under the royal jurisdiction of his higher authority. Its decree can only be executed by that same monarch. Believers are “sealed” in Christ, meaning they will permanently persevere in their union with Christ.

In ancient times, an enthroned king would press his signet ring upon the wax of a closed document. This signified that no one else may open it to execute or overturn its contents. Breaking this seal would require an even greater ruler to open it. In like manner, every believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ. It would be necessary for a greater power than the omnipotent Spirit to break open the seal and extricate a believer from being in Christ. But such a superpower does not exist, because none can overpower God and remove a believer from Christ. Every genuine Christian is permanently secured in Christ, never to be removed from Him.

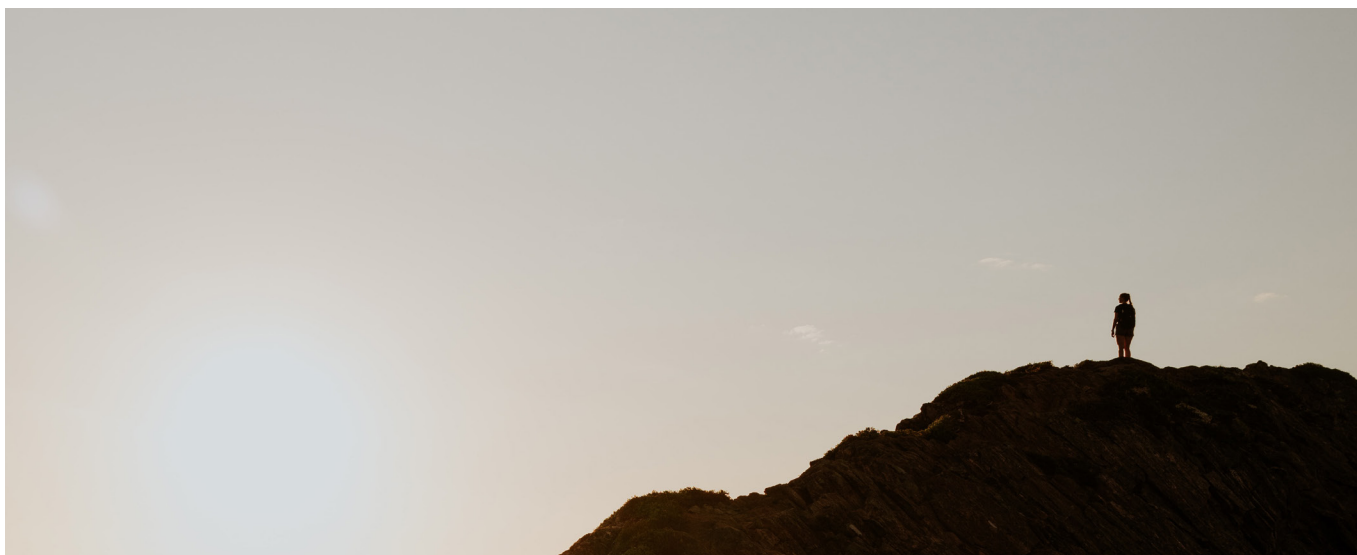
### ***A Pledge of God’s Inheritance***

In this same passage, Paul continues to explain that the Holy Spirit “is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory” (Eph 1:14). The Spirit is given by God to all believers as a pledge of their future inheritance in heaven. The word “pledge” (*arrabōn*) means a down payment that is made in advance, showing good intentions of the purchaser to complete the transaction in the future. This money is given up front to secure the possession of a purchased object. This same word later came to be used of an engagement ring that signified the good intentions of the groom-to-be to marry his fiancée.

As applied to believers, they receive the Holy Spirit, who is deposited within them, at the time of their conversion. It is God’s present down payment that secures the fullness of their future inheritance in heaven. Receiving the Holy Spirit when they believe in Christ guarantees that one day, in heaven, they will receive their full legacy. The greatest value of this inheritance is entering into the immediate presence of God and beholding His face. It will be to see Jesus Christ face to face, as He now is, as King of kings and Lord of lords. It will be to worship Him in their future glorified state without any earthly limitations or distractions. By this sealing, the eternal security of all believers is made certain.

### **EXPOSIT THE DENIALS**

Throughout the Gospel of John, there is found a series of emphatic negative denials that stress both the perseverance of the saints and their eternal security. These negatives confirm the absolute impossibility of any believer losing



his salvation. Each strong statement of negative denial reiterates the utter impossibility of a believer suffering eternal perdition in the flames of hell. Let us now consider several of these denials.

### ***Believers Will Never Perish***

Jesus taught this truth to Nicodemus when He said, “Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). To “perish” (*apolluō*) means to be utterly destroyed in eternal punishment. It means to suffer the wrath of God in hell throughout the ages to come. It means to be ever perishing, yet never finally perish. What Jesus promises is that believers will never be afflicted with the eternal torment of the lake of fire. Such a dreadful destiny will not await those who commit their lives to Christ. They “shall not perish,” because they are rescued from eternal ruin by Christ Himself.

Later, Jesus addressed the same subject, saying that His sheep “will never perish” (John 10:28). In addition, “No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (v. 29). This pictures the double security of divine salvation. All the sheep are kept safe by the Father and the Son. This is why Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (v. 30). The two persons of the Trinity are inseparably united in His saving efforts of His own people. In His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus interceded with the Father, “I guarded them and not one of them perished” (John 17:12). In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus affirmed, “Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one” (John 18:9). None of His own will ever perish.

### ***Believers Will Never Thirst***

To the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus said, “Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst” (John 4:14). The one who drinks of the Lord Jesus Christ will “never thirst” again. This is an emphatic disavowal, stressing its impossibility. No one who believes in Jesus will ever thirst again. Christ quenches the deepest longings of the human soul forever. He satisfies the inner desires of the human heart forever. Again, Jesus says, “He who believes in Me will never thirst” (John 6:35). Upon receiving Him by faith, a believer will “never thirst,” not in this world, not in the world to come.

This negative denial speaks to the perseverance of the saints. There will never be a season when Jesus leaves a believer wanting more. No one will ever reach the place where Jesus is not enough to satisfy his inner thirst. Further, “never thirst” speaks to the eternal security of the believer. Given that every lost soul will thirst forever in hell (Luke 16:24), this denial of ever thirsting again indicates that a believer will never return to an empty,

unsatisfied condition. Because Jesus promises that a believer will never thirst, this means he will never suffer a spiritual drought that would lead him to the flames of the lake of fire.

### ***Believer Will Never Hunger***

Moreover, Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger” (John 6:35). The one who believes in Jesus Christ will never again long to be filled in the depths of his being. Every person who repents and puts his trust in Him will never again be empty within his soul. He will never need to look elsewhere to have his innermost desires fulfilled. Nothing will sever his all-satisfying relationship with Christ. He is eternally secure in Him, both now and forevermore.

The psalmist David wrote, “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Ps 23:1). He testifies that the Good Shepherd meets all the innermost longings that he will ever have. David continues, “He makes me lie down in green pastures” (v. 2). As a shepherd leads his flock to gaze in the choicest meadows, the Lord leads him to be fed to his fullest delight. Enjoyment of this satisfying food means feeding upon and fellowshiping with the Lord Himself. David elsewhere adds, “O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” (Ps 34:8) Feasting upon the Lord is indescribably good for all His sheep.

### ***Believers Will Never Die***

In addition, Jesus says that He is living bread who comes down out of heaven. The one who eats of this bread will “not die” (John 6:50). This death refers not to physical death, but to the second death (Rev 20:6, 14), which is suffering eternal destruction. Eating of this bread is a direct reference to believing in Jesus Christ Himself. He promises that this one “will live forever” with God (John 6:51). To “live forever” means that a believer will never die spiritually—that is, never be separated from Christ. He will die physically, unless Christ comes first, but he will never die the second death, resulting in “eternal punishment” (Matt 25:46).

Jesus states the same again: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies” (John 11:25). Even if a believer “dies” physically, he nevertheless will “live” forever with Him. This is an astonishing claim made by Christ, a clear promise that every believer will live in the immediate presence of God. This dwelling place will remain throughout the unending ages to come. Here is taught the eternal security of the believer, a life that lasts beyond death and the grave with God.

## EXPECT THE QUESTIONS

As you teach the preserving grace of God, you should expect that certain questions will be asked. This is good, because it means that your listeners are following what you are saying. There will be legitimate issues that you will need to address. You should anticipate what some of these questions are and address them in the pulpit. Better for you to address them as you preach than for them to be addressed by others after you preach. Here are two questions that you can expect to be raised.

### *Can a Believer Live in Carnality?*

A true Christian can never live in a perpetual state of carnality. But a believer can lapse into temporal seasons in which he walks in the flesh. The church at Corinth had many genuine saints who were called into fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9) but were temporarily living in a carnal state. Paul writes, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ” (1 Cor 3:1). Although the Corinthians were truly converted, their sinful flesh continued to hold sway over their lives because they were not fully controlled by the Spirit. Consequently, they were unable to digest “the solid food” that he desired to give them (v. 2) that would produce their spiritual growth.

Sufficient time had passed for Corinthians to have spiritually matured. So, Paul rebuked them, saying, “you are still fleshly” and “walking like mere men” (1 Cor 3:3). This teaches that these saints were stunted in their spiritual growth and, at times, acting like unbelievers in the world. This state would not be true for their whole Christian life. But it did describe this isolated period in their personal walk with the Lord. Though they would eventually grow out of this carnal phase, they were susceptible to this time when they were walking with fleshly desires.

### *The Sins of the Saints*

There is much for us to learn from this to clarify in our preaching. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints does not mean that a believer can never backslide into a carnal condition. It does not mean that a Christian can never commit gross sins. Noah got drunk. Abraham lied about his wife. Moses struck the rock in anger. David committed adultery and covered it up with murder. Jonah ran away from God’s will. Peter denied knowing the Lord. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit. John Mark abandoned Paul. A believer is capable of committing these sins.

However, when a Christian lapses into such sins, several realities will become true in his life. Such a believer will be convicted by the Holy Spirit. He will humble himself

before the Lord. He will confess his sin to God and seek His forgiveness. He will repent of his sin and turn away from it. He will seek to make it right with whomever has been affected by his sin. He will not glory in his sin but be grieved by it. He will warn others from falling into such a trap. If he is slow to pursue this corrective path, God will send His loving but painful discipline to bring about this response. But he will not be allowed to continue in his sin.

### *Can a Believer Walk in the Flesh?*

Despite the perseverance of saints, the believer must still make the conscious choice to walk not by the flesh, but by the Spirit. Paul writes, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Gal 5:16). This apostolic command clearly means that there are times when a believer will choose to walk in carnality rather than in dependence upon the Spirit. Every Christian must make the intentional choice to walk in the power of the Spirit. But admittedly, there will be times when his flesh leads him into sin.

Taking fleshly steps does not mean that a person is unconverted. Rather, it indicates that he is momentarily not walking by the Spirit. An intense spiritual warfare is taking place within the soul of every believer. The Holy Spirit and the flesh are in fierce opposition to each other. Paul continues, “For the flesh sets its desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please” (v. 17). This internal conflict is not an indication that a person is unsaved. In fact, this struggle is proof that he *is* saved, because only a believer has the Holy Spirit within him.

## EXPOSE THE ERRORS

There are selected passages to which some people appeal in order to show that believers can lose their salvation. It will be helpful to consider some of those passages in what follows. As we look at them, let us remember one of the key principles of interpretation—namely, no verse should be understood apart from the whole Bible. We should never view the whole Bible in light of one passage. Rather, we should always understand any one verse in light of the whole Bible. Let us address some of the passages to which people appeal to support their faulty position.

### *A Believer Cannot Fall from Grace*

In correcting the false teaching that was circulating in Galatia, the Apostle Paul writes, “You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Gal 5:4). Some read this verse

and jump to the conclusion that a believer can be “severed from Christ” and therefore be “fallen from grace.” But the important, determinative issue is identifying the “you.” According to Paul, this addresses someone who is “seeking to be justified by law.” Such phrasing can only refer to an unbeliever who is attempting to earn salvation by his own efforts of keeping the law. This person is separated from Christ because he has never been joined to Him. This one has fallen away from the teaching of the grace of the gospel.

By contrast, Paul addresses the true believers in the next verse. They are those who believe in the purity of the gospel. He writes, “For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness” (v. 5). Here, Paul includes himself with this different group as “we.” These individuals already possess the imputed righteousness of Christ by faith alone. They now await the certain “hope” of completing their practical righteousness in glorification. This is the assurance of every believer in the future and final aspect of saving grace in Christ. No true believer (“we”) can fall away from Christ once joined to Him. Only an unbeliever (“you”) can do so.

### ***A Believer Cannot Fall Away from Repentance***

The signature text for those who insist you can lose your salvation is as follows: “For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance” (Heb 6:4–6). The most critical question here is: To whom is the writer of Hebrews issuing this warning?

To rightly answer this question, we must see the building argument of the book of Hebrews. The author presents the superiority of Jesus Christ over every aspect of the Old Covenant. Jesus is greater than the angels, the prophets, the order of Melchizedek, and the sacrificial system. The recipients are Jews, as the title of the book suggests, who have not yet come all the way to faith in Jesus Christ. They have heard the truth of the gospel, which has brought them great pleasure. But because of the persecution that would await them, they have not committed their lives to Christ.

### ***The Third Warning Passage***

These warning passages are designed to urge them to no longer halt short of the grace of God. There are five warning passages in this epistle, and each is addressed to the same group (2:1–4; 3:7–4:11; 4:4–8; 10:26–31; 12:25–29). Each one is an evangelistic plea, calling the reader to come all the way to faith in Jesus Christ. It is not enough to be

intellectually enlightened concerning the truth about Him and the way of salvation He provides. They must commit themselves to Him with wholehearted, saving faith. These verses in Hebrews 6:4–8 are the third of these warning passages in this epistle.

The whole book is described by the author as a “word of exhortation” (Heb 13:22). This same phrase was used to describe an evangelistic sermon preached by Paul on his first missionary journey to bring those at Pisidian Antioch to faith in Christ (Acts 13:15). So, the book of Hebrews is a “word of exhortation,” designed to urge those undecided Jews to take that decisive step of faith and come to trust Christ as their Lord and Savior.

### ***Refusing Gospel Truth***

In this third warning passage, the author describes those who have “been enlightened” by the gospel truth (v. 4). That is, they have received the knowledge of the gospel. Under its teaching, they “have tasted of the heavenly gift,” but they have not swallowed the message. They “have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit” in His convicting ministry, but they have not accepted the truth. They “have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,” but they have only “tasted” it; it has not been ingested and internalized (v. 5). After receiving the full knowledge of the truth, they have remained undecided about Jesus Christ.

In failing to receive Christ, they “have fallen away” from Him, making it “impossible to renew them again to repentance” (v. 6). They have hardened their own hearts in unbelief to the point that many will never enter into God’s rest of salvation (Heb 3:8, 15; 4:7). In light of the full knowledge of the truth, they have concluded that Jesus is a mere man who deserved to be crucified. In reaching this point, “they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame” (v. 6). By their unbelief, they “have trampled under foot the Son of God” and have “regarded” the blood He shed to be “unclean” (Heb 10:29). They have “insulted the Spirit of grace,” who testifies to them that Jesus is the Savior.

### ***Yielding Thorns and Thistles***


Of these who refuse to believe the gospel, their heart is like unreceptive soil that “yields thorns and thistles” (Heb 6:8). No spiritual fruit comes from their lives. Instead, they are “worthless and close to being cursed.” Such an unbelieving life is only a heartbeat away from being cast into the eternal fire, where “it ends up being burned.” This certainly does not describe a believer in Christ, but an unbeliever who possesses a head knowledge of the truth that has not found a place in the heart.

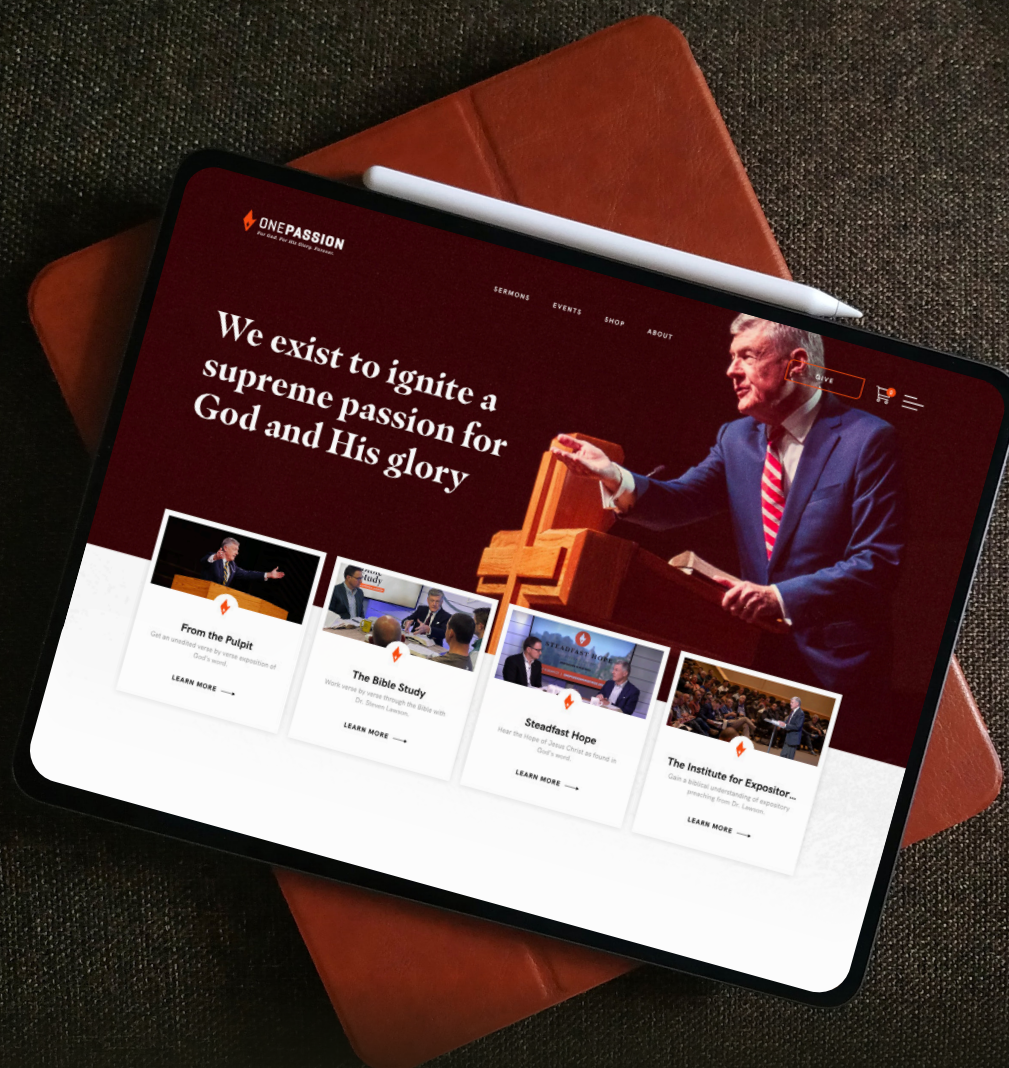
This is why the author of Hebrews says, “But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation” (v. 9). This description stands in stark contrast to those in the preceding verses who reject the gospel. They were not saved at first and then later they lost their salvation. The fact is, they were never converted to Christ in the first place. They rejected the full knowledge of the gospel truth and so hardened their hearts that they will never be brought back again to the place of repentance.

### A DOCTRINE TO BE PREACHED

This truth of the perseverance of the saints, which includes

their eternal security, must be preached from every pulpit. It is inconceivable that any preacher could be silent about this cornerstone doctrine. Every believer needs to have their knowledge of this truth increased and their confidence deepened in it. Both understanding and boldness will be significantly bolstered as this bedrock doctrine is proclaimed. As with every teaching, it must be done in the power of the Holy Spirit, or it will not prevail.

As you preach this truth, it should be done from the whole Bible. Preach it from both the Old Testament and New Testament. Preach it to believers and unbelievers. Preach it to edify and evangelize. Preach it to comfort and convict. Make certain to preach this truth to all. 







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# PRESERVING FAITH

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JOHN MACARTHUR


**H**ow can one be assured that he is a true believer in Christ and will not one day fall away, revealing that he was never a true believer at all? Scripture calls those who profess faith in Christ to examine themselves. Paul urges the Corinthians, “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves” (2 Cor 13:5 ESV). Peter similarly exhorts the churches in his care, “Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election” (2 Pet 1:10). The apostle John dedicated his entire first epistle to the subject, stating his theme at the end: “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).

The authors of Scripture clearly desired that believers be assured of their salvation by examining their lives for evidence of genuine spiritual life. Consider the following

eleven lines of evidence—largely drawn from the tests outlined in 1 John—by which Christians can gain assurance that their faith and salvation are genuine.

## **EVIDENCES FROM THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

First, a true Christian enjoys fellowship with the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit. At the beginning of his letter, John tells his readers that he is proclaiming the gospel to them in order that they might experience the same communion with God that he enjoys. He says, “That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). Indeed, the one who is born of God loves both the Father and the Son (1 John 5:1). Paul likewise describes



# The hearts of God's people are strengthened and encouraged when their Father answers those prayers for His glory and their benefit.

salvation as being “called into the fellowship of [Christ]” (1 Cor 1:9), and he characterizes his Christian life as living by faith in Jesus, who lives in him (Gal 2:20). Salvation is to personally taste and see that the Lord is good (Ps 34:8)—to walk with God, intimately knowing Him as “the God of all comfort” (2 Cor 1:3), “the God of all grace” (1 Pet 5:10), and the God who supplies all our needs according to His riches in Christ (Phil 4:19). He is the One to whom we draw near in times of trouble (Heb 4:16), crying, “Abba! Father!” (Rom 8:15). Those who regularly experience this communion with God in love, in joy, in prayer, and in the discovery of biblical truth can rejoice in the assurance that their faith is genuine.

A second evidence of genuine salvation is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the heart. John writes, “By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit” (1 John 4:13). When a sinner confesses that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world and commits his life to Him, it is the Spirit’s doing. The Spirit also illumines the believer’s mind to understand Scripture, as John says: “The anointing that you received

from him abides in you, and ... teaches you about everything” (1 John 2:27; cf. 1 Cor 2:10, 12). The Spirit convicts, encourages, and brings joy to the true believer’s heart as he studies the Bible. Further, the Spirit produces fruit in the true believer’s life, such that his life is marked by “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control” (Gal 5:22–23).

Third, Christians may gain assurance of salvation from answered prayer. John says, “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us” (1 John 5:14; cf. 3:22). A true believer prays according to the will of God, asking for forgiveness and a clear conscience, for boldness to proclaim the gospel, and for contentment in times of difficulty. The hearts of God’s people are strengthened and encouraged when their Father answers those prayers for His glory and their benefit.

Fourth, the true citizen of heaven eagerly longs for Christ’s return (Phil 3:20). The foundational characteristic of the true Christian is love for Christ (1 Cor 16:22). That love causes him to eagerly await the day when he will see

his Savior face-to-face and thus be perfectly conformed into His image (Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:1–3). This is an indication of the presence of a new nature, which longs to be delivered from a body of sin to become like the perfect Christ. Such holy longings and affections are an indication of genuine salvation.

### **EVIDENCES FROM THE CHRISTIAN'S SPIRITUAL LIFE AND GROWTH**

A fifth evidence of salvation is spiritual discernment. Those who are born again are able to discern between spiritual truth and error—to test the spirits to see whether they are from God (1 John 4:1–3). Adherents of false religious systems attempt to undermine the biblical truth concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:16), but God equips His children to recognize and reject false teachers and to cling to sound teaching (1 John 2:12–19; 4:5–6). While even the demons may believe sound doctrine and be destitute of saving faith (James 2:19), one will not enjoy true assurance without believing sound doctrine (1 Thess 5:21; 1 Tim 6:3–5; 2 Tim 2:13–14).

Sixth, an acute awareness of the holiness of God and the guilt of one's sin always accompanies genuine salvation. John writes, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:8–10). An identifying characteristic of unbelievers is that they do not regard themselves as sinners. They fail to recognize the absolute moral perfection of God—that He is light and that in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). Failing to see themselves in the light, they do not recognize the extent to which they are polluted by the darkness of sin. True believers, however, have a keen sense of their sinfulness, and their lives are characterized by increasingly putting off sin and putting on righteousness. When they sin, they experience the godly sorrow of a cleansed conscience that leads them to repentance (2 Cor 7:10), and they confess their sin and seek forgiveness in Christ. Paul's personal testimony in Romans 7:14–25 is an example of the believer's sensitivity and aversion to sin. Like the apostle, the true children of God sin in various ways but confess their sin and seek restoration to communion with God. The false Christian ignores and hides sin, but the genuine believer cries out with Paul: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24). The child of God is wearied by the burden of sin and longs for restored fellowship with the Father through confession and repentance.

A seventh manifestation of genuine salvation is the

decreasing pattern of sin in one's life. Not only is the child of God sensitive to his remaining sin, but by the grace of God and the power of the Spirit, he will also have progressive victory over those sins. John writes, "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God" (1 John 3:9). Regardless of one's profession, unbroken patterns of sin mark the unregenerate (1 John 3:8), not the children of God. When the sinner is regenerated, the dominion of sin is broken, and the Spirit births holy affections in the new convert. Indwelling sin remains, but the love of sin is broken. The true Christian is no longer enslaved to sin but is a slave to righteousness (Rom 6:14–18).

Eighth, as patterns of sin decrease, patterns of obedience increase. John could not be clearer: "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3). The Greek word translated "keep" (*tēreō*) speaks of watchful, careful, thoughtful obedience—not just the hands but also the heart. True Christian obedience is a willing, habitual safeguarding of the Word both in letter and in spirit. A true believer obeys the commandments of Scripture (John 8:31), and patterns of sustained obedience produce confidence that one has a saving relationship with God.

### **EVIDENCES FROM THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER PEOPLE**


A ninth evidence of genuine salvation is a growing rejection of the worldliness that dominates human life. In 1 John 2:15, John writes about the true Christian's deepest affections, greatest desires, and ultimate goals, commanding us, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (cf. James 4:4). "The world" speaks of the evil world system operated by Satan (cf. 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2; 1 John 5:19), which encompasses false religion, errant philosophy, crime, immorality, materialism, and the like. While these things dominate the affections and will of all unbelievers, they disgust the true believer. It is true that Christians may sometimes be lured into worldly things, but such sin brings conviction, confession, and repentance. Though remaining sin is frustrating and discouraging, true believers can be grateful that sin is a reality they have been made to hate and no longer love (Rom 7:15). New life in Christ nurtures love for God and the things of God. Thus, those examining themselves must ask whether they reject this evil world system, along with all its false ideologies, damning religions, godless lifestyles, and vain pursuits, and instead love God, His truth, and His people. Such affections are neither

natural nor attractive to depraved humanity (John 3:19–20; 8:44) and therefore are evidence of the Spirit’s grace at work in the heart.

Tenth, the genuine Christian not only rejects the world but is also rejected by the world. For this reason, John writes, “Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you” (1 John 3:13). When God’s people stand apart from the world—rejecting its sinful values and standing for righteousness—its evil is exposed. Because darkness hates the light (John 3:19–20), it reacts with animosity and hostility to those influences that expose it. In the preceding verse, John notes that Cain hated his brother and murdered him precisely because Abel’s righteous behavior exposed Cain’s wicked rebellion (1 John 3:12). God’s people, then, will experience ostracism, rejection, and even persecution by the world because they do not belong to Christ, who also suffered for the sake of righteousness (Matt 5:10–12; John 15:18–21; Phil 1:29; 2 Tim 3:12; 1 Pet 4:12–14). Those searching for assurance must ask if they are readily accepted by the world or if, as those conformed to the image of Christ, they draw the same rejection that Christ Himself

drew from the enemies of righteousness (John 7:7).

Finally, antithetical to the hatred of and rejection by the evil world system is a true believer’s love for fellow Christians. First John 3:10 says, “By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother” (cf. 1 John 2:9–11). Loving fellow Christians comes naturally to the believer. As Paul said to the Thessalonian church, “Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another” (1 Thess 4:9). Jesus went so far as to say that His disciples’ love for one another would be the evidence before all people that they were His followers (John 13:35). Therefore, those who are cold, uncaring, and indifferent toward other believers betray a self-centeredness that is indicative of unbelief, but those who delight in the fellowship of their brothers and sisters in Christ and eagerly desire to meet the needs of the saints can be assured that they are of the truth (1 John 3:16–19). ✦



**Those searching for assurance must ask if they are readily accepted by the world or if, as those conformed to the image of Christ, they draw the same rejection that Christ Himself drew from the enemies of righteousness (John 7:7).**

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# PERSEVERANCE AND ASSURANCE

—  
JOEL R. BEEKE

**G**enuine perseverance and assurance are sorely lacking among Christians today. The fruits of perseverance and assurance—diligent use of the means of grace, perseverance in heartfelt obedience to God’s will, desire for fellowship with God, yearning for God’s glory and heaven, love for the church and intercession for her revival—all appear to be waning. We desperately need rich, doctrinal thinking about perseverance and assurance coupled with vibrant, sanctified living.

What is “perseverance of the saints” and what is “assurance of faith”? How do perseverance and assurance assist each other in the Christian life?

## **PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS**

We first must ask, who are the saints? Many would extend “eternal security” to all baptized persons, or to all who have

made decisions for Christ at evangelistic meetings. Scripture and the Reformed Confessions speak only of the perseverance of “saints,” defined as those “whom God calls, according to his purpose, to the communion of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit” (*Canons of Dort*, fifth head, article 1). And according to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (17.1), saints are defined as those whom “God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit.” By the preserving work of the triune God (1 Cor 1:8–9), such persons will persevere in true faith, and in the works that proceed from faith, so long as they continue in the world.

Some theologians prefer to speak of the *preservation* of the saints, while others prefer to speak of the *perseverance* of the saints. These two notions are closely related, but not the same. The preserving activity of God undergirds the saints’ perseverance. He keeps them in the faith, preserves

# Assurance is known by fruits such as close fellowship with God, childlike obedience, and longing to glorify Him in all things. Assured believers view heaven as their home; they long for Christ's return and their translation to glory (2 Tim 4:6–8).

them from straying, and ultimately perfects them (1 Pet 1:5; Jude 24). We may be confident that God will finish the work of grace He has begun in us (Ps 138:8; Phil 1:6; Heb 12:2). Believers are preserved through Christ's intercession (Luke 22:32; John 17:5) and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16; 1 John 2:27).

Perseverance itself, however, is the saints' lifelong activity: confessing Christ as Savior (Rom 10:9), bringing forth the fruits of grace (John 15:16), enduring to the end (Matt 10:22; Heb 10:28–29). Saints do this, of course, only because of the preserving activity of God at work in them (Phil 2:13). Even so, perseverance includes but extends beyond preservation.

## ASSURANCE OF FAITH

Assurance of faith is the conviction that by God's grace one belongs to Christ, has received full pardon for all sins, and will inherit eternal life. One who has true assurance not only believes in Christ for salvation but also knows that he believes.

Such assurance includes freedom from guilt, joy in

God, and a sense of belonging to the family of God. Assurance is also dynamic, varying according to conditions, capable of growing in force and fruitfulness.

Assurance is known by fruits such as close fellowship with God, childlike obedience, and longing to glorify Him in all things. Assured believers view heaven as their home; they long for Christ's return and their translation to glory (2 Tim 4:6–8).

## ASSURANCE, THEN PERSEVERANCE

The fruits of assurance promote perseverance. The *Canons of Dort* affirm that believers “may and do” obtain assurance of their perseverance. That assurance, however, is grounded in “the preservation of the elect unto salvation.” Take away those words, and every conscientious believer would despair. Failures in duty would overwhelm whatever fruits we might discover and destroy all assurance. By speaking first of God's election and preservation, the *Canons* show that assurance is rooted in God's sovereign grace and promises—yes, in God Himself.

Assurance helps the believer persevere, first, by

encouraging him to rest on God's grace in Christ and His promises in the Gospel; and second, by presenting these as a powerful motive for Christian living.

### **PERSEVERANCE, THEN ASSURANCE**

Christians who have enjoyed seasons of assured confidence of their right standing before God can and do have their assurance of faith shaken. At such times, they feel the ebbing and flowing of their assurance. The loss of assurance can be very disconcerting to them. Perhaps you also have struggled with this loss and wondered: How can I regain a strong sense of assurance? And in the future, how can I avoid the problem of losing assurance again? The *Westminster Confession of Faith* provides us with guidance:

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 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. (18.4)

This paragraph is a magnificent statement of the links between biblical guidance, Reformed theology, and Puritan piety. It declares that the reasons for a lack of assurance are found primarily in the believer. They include negligence in preserving assurance, falling into a special or particular sin, and the onslaught of sudden, powerful temptation. Anthony Burgess, unmatched even among the Puritans on issues related to assurance, wrote in *Spiritual Refining*,

It is true the most tender and exact godly ones, as Job and David, are sometimes in desertions, and cry out God hath forsaken them, but ordinarily the more formal and careless we are in our approaches to God, the more are our doubts and fears.

Burgess said that assurance may be hindered, even temporarily lost, for several reasons. First, assurance can be diminished when we deeply feel the guilt of sin, for then we tend to look upon God as one who will take vengeance rather than forgive. Second, Satan hates assurance, and he will do everything he can to keep doubts and fears alive within us. Third and most commonly, the hypocrisy of our hearts and careless living hinder assurance.

*Westminster Confession* 18.4 teaches us that we cannot enjoy high levels of genuine assurance as Christians if we persist in low levels of obedience. Then "we chase away our assurance," Burgess explained. "Nothing will darken your soul more than dull, lazy, and negligent walking." If assurance remains high while obedience falters, we may be taking our astounding privilege of adopted sonship for



**Christians who have enjoyed seasons of assured confidence of their right standing before God can and do have their assurance of faith shaken.**

granted and growing spiritually lazy. Knowing that backsliding diminishes assurance ought to keep us active in searching our souls and pursuing holiness.

Note, however, that the Puritans did not simply ground assurance in our obedience or disobedience. They sought to refute both Arminianism and antinomianism. Salvation is all of grace; the human will, apart from divine grace, has no ability or strength to reach or retain full assurance. We cannot will or work ourselves into assurance. On the other hand, the loss of assurance shows that sin has serious consequences for believers, who do not fall into sin without great cost, for sin separates them from God (Isa. 59:2). The Puritan William Jenkyn explained that sin can never bereave a saint of the jewel of grace upon which his salvation is founded, but it may steal away the key of the cabinet—his assurance.


In chapter 17, the *Westminster Confession* affirms that all who belong to Christ will persevere, for our perseverance

is secured by our persevering, preserving God. The Father perseveres in loving us, the Son perseveres in interceding for us, and the Spirit perseveres in abiding with us and working in us. God promises His own, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb 13:5). Thus, when we lack assurance, the responsibility is ours. No enemy can keep us out of heaven, but we may well keep heaven out of our hearts by sinning against God.

The *Confession* doesn’t stop there, however. It also asserts the possibility of God’s involvement in the believer’s lack or loss of assurance. Lost assurance, 18.4 says, may also be the result of “God’s withdrawing of the light of His countenance.”

Burgess acknowledges that it seems senseless at first sight for God to withhold assurance from a believer, for assurance is “wings and legs in a man’s service to God. It would enflame him more to promote God’s glory.” But Burgess then offers five reasons God might withhold assurance





**God’s withdrawal of the light of His countenance and allowing trials in our path are aspects of His fatherly discipline, teaching us to walk upright before Him, to depend on His fatherly sovereignty, and to confide in His fatherly wisdom—all of which do our soul great good.**

from His people. First, that we might understand how bitter sin is. Second, that God might keep us low and humble in ourselves. Third, that we might value assurance even more when we have it in larger measure. Fourth, that we might pursue obedience to God even more and give Him glory for our obedience to Him. Fifth, that we may become experienced Christians who know how to comfort others in distress over their lack of assurance.

We might question some of Burgess’ reasons for God’s “withdrawal.” But remember two things: first, to understand Burgess, we need to recognize that the Puritans believed that withdrawal on God’s part is always for holy reasons, but sometimes beyond the comprehension of the believer, who simply by faith has to trust God’s intentions. Second, those reasons are like so many pieces of a jigsaw puzzle—that is, possible and partial explanations, not a

complete account of the problem. None of the Puritans offered a complete list of reasons. Rather, they grappled with the experiential and pastoral reality of times when they or their hearers might not be falling into sin yet might lack assurance and feel distant from God. Burgess wanted to deal compassionately with those who earnestly seek assurance of grace and salvation but have not as yet partaken of it.

*Westminster Confession* 18.4 also asserts that God’s withdrawal is often connected with what the Puritans called “vehement temptations,” or providential afflictions. God’s goal in our afflictions, however, is to glorify His name and to do us good (Rom 8:28; Heb 12:10). At first, we may feel a loss of assurance when cast into the furnace of affliction, but God’s grand design is that affliction strengthens both our faith and our assurance. God uses afflictions to wean us from this world, to stimulate our spiritual growth,

to open new vistas of faith, to increase our intimacy with God and submission to His providence, and to act overall as a healing tonic for our soul. In sum, God's withdrawal of the light of His countenance and allowing trials in our path are aspects of His fatherly discipline, teaching us to walk upright before Him, to depend on His fatherly sovereignty, and to confide in His fatherly wisdom—all of which do our soul great good.

According to the *Confession*, loss of assurance does not destroy the germ or seed of faith in us, because even our darkness cannot quench God's saving work. Saving faith cannot die, though its exercise may diminish to such a degree that we have little or no assurance. Even in our lowest spiritual condition, the Holy Spirit keeps us "from utter despair." Moreover, the Spirit will also revive our assurance "in due time."

Assurance is revived in the same way it is obtained in the first place. We should review our lives, confess our sins, and humbly cast ourselves upon our covenant-keeping God and His gracious promises, trusting in Christ and His mediatorial work. We should use the means of grace diligently, pursue holiness, exercise watchfulness, and take heed not to grieve, resist, or quench the Spirit. In other words, by faith and by grace, we are to turn to God afresh in repentance and faith. Such returning to the Lord will result in the revival and enlargement of our assurance of grace and salvation.

The road to assurance of grace and salvation has twists and turns, ups and downs. Many times we wander from the path and have to retrace our steps and begin afresh to walk in the ways of God. Again and again, we find how necessary it is to trust increasingly in Christ, relying only on His merit and heeding His commands. In a 1990 article in the *Westminster Theological Journal*, Richard Hawkes

summarizes this well:

The work of assurance is a continuing exercise, a cycle, but an ascending cycle because it is God working to raise the believer up to himself. ... By a helical process of trust, obedience, evaluation, and learning, God draws the believer from an initial approbation of the way of salvation in Christ to a full restful assurance that encompasses all aspects of the believer's life and consciousness. ... That is the very hopeful message of the Puritans' doctrine of assurance. It is by no means the heavy burden of self-justification or even self-assurance, but rather the light yoke of faith in the work of [Jesus Christ].

Thus, all of the *Westminster Confession's* statements on assurance have the goal of leading us to make our calling and election sure by finding everything necessary for our salvation in the Spirit-applied grace of God in Jesus Christ.

#### **EITHER WAY, IT IS ALL BY GOD'S GRACE**

Perseverance and assurance are two sides of one coin. You cannot persevere in grace without growing in assurance, and you cannot grow in assurance of faith without perseverance. This growth isn't easily attained, but it is attainable through God's grace.

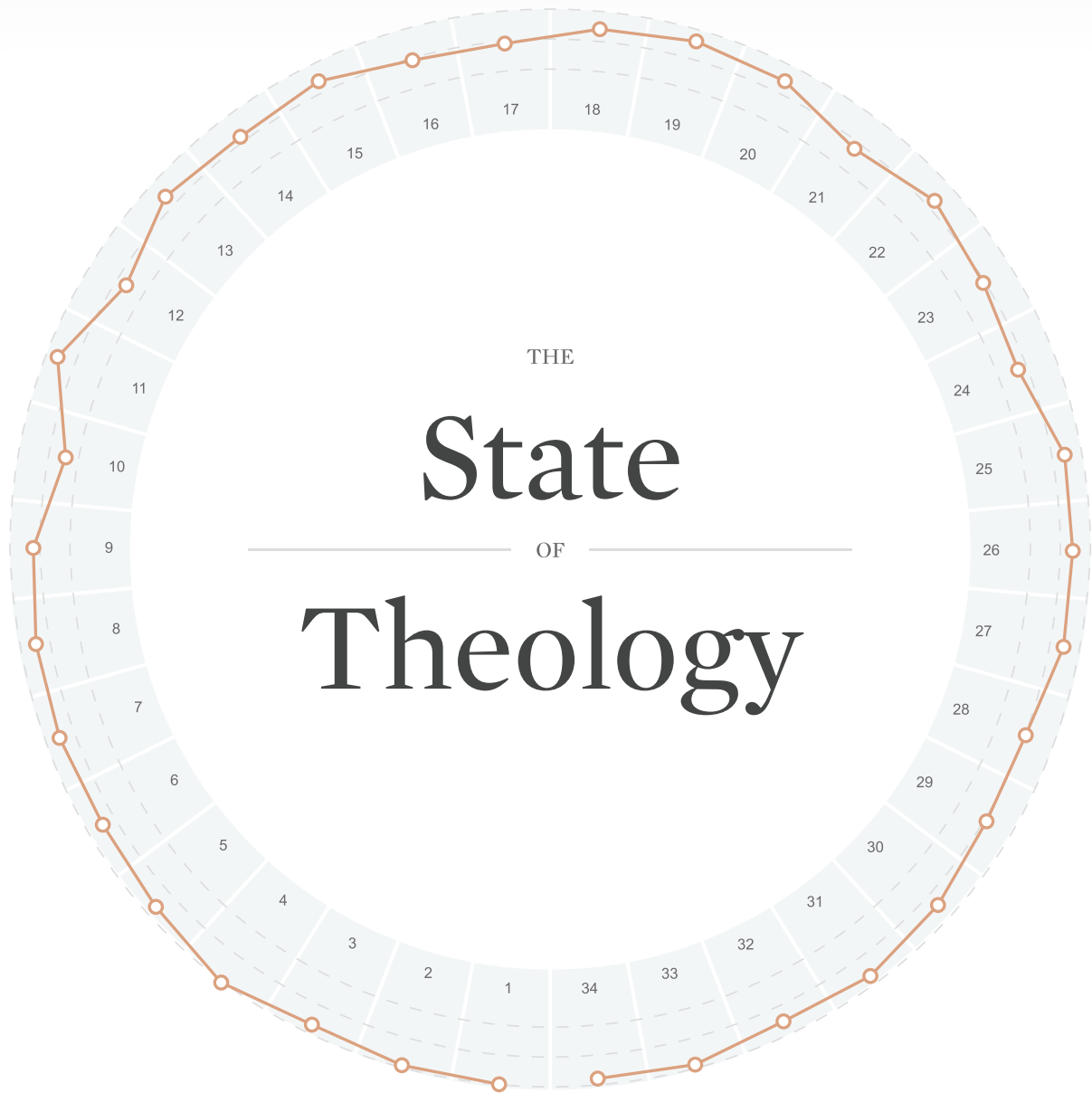
With a comfortable assurance of persevering, we, with John Newton, can sing of God's amazing grace:

Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come.  
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home. ♦



**The road to assurance of grace  
and salvation has twists and  
turns, ups and downs.**





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# KEEP THE FAITH: THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

—  
GEOFFREY THOMAS

**J**ohn 10:28–30: “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one” (NIV 1984).

I don’t think there is any difficulty in understanding the phrase “the perseverance of the saints.” It means that all who have been truly born of God will keep persevering in the faith until they get to heaven. God has promised and covenanted to preserve every one of His people. He will hang in with us throughout our earthly pilgrimage, in all its ups and downs, until we are safe home in glory. He is alongside us in the roller coaster even when we’re crying out in fear. God is like the very best father who is always there for his son even when he becomes prodigal and goes

off to the distant city and lives like a wretch. Our heavenly Father never says to one of His children, “Well, that’s it. Enough is enough. Son, now you’re on your own.” He’s ever looking out for us on the way back to Him, and when He sees us, He runs to greet us.

A friend was a student pilot, and one day he was flying a small aircraft when a sudden emergency arose. What should he do to gain control of the plane? He could do nothing, but the instructor was in the plane with him. The plane had dual controls, and the instructor immediately took command of the instruments. Then my friend let go of his, and the instructor brought the plane out of danger.

That is a picture of the wisdom and ability of Jesus at work in our lives. God is like a great coach who is very interested in the sportsmen under his care. An athlete might

**God keeps persevering with us so that the gates of hell can never prevail against one little Christian. God keeps persevering with us so that Satan cannot destroy us... It is impossible for any of God's children to lose their blood-bought redemption and end up in hell.**

be accident-prone and uncoordinated, but the coach keeps faith with him and is full of suggestions and schemes to strengthen him and keep him going. I am saying that this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints teaches that God keeps persevering with us, keeps forgiving us, keeps picking us up and dusting us down. He never allows us to be tried and tempted above our ability to bear it. He's always giving us a way of escape, or He dampens down the temptation, or He makes the sin revulsive to us, or He takes away our desire for it. When He often humbles us, it is but to keep us going back to Him for strength and mercy.

God keeps persevering with us so that the gates of hell can never prevail against one little Christian. God keeps persevering with us so that Satan cannot destroy us. God keeps persevering with us so that this wee Christian lassie

is more than a conqueror through God's love. It is impossible for any of God's children to lose their blood-bought redemption and end up in hell. Every Christian can sing the words of Augustus Toplady:

Yes I to the end shall endure  
As soon as the earnest is given;  
More happy but not more secure  
The glorified spirits in heaven.

The archangels Gabriel and Michael may be happier than me, but I am as unlikely to end up in hell as either of them. I affirm this truth, and I am going to show you from the Scriptures that this is the plain teaching of the Bible.

None of the cults believe in the perseverance of the

Christian, because they don't believe in a sovereign God and they witness many of their adherents falling away. The Roman Catholics don't believe this truth because of their commitment to the idea of man's "free will." In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* we read, "Angels and men, as intelligent and free creatures, have to journey toward their ultimate destinies by their free choice and preferential love. They can therefore go astray." Of course, the modernist doesn't believe it for the same reason, and even the Arminian won't accept perseverance. You would expect gospel Christians to believe this teaching because it is right on the surface of the Word of God. But often this is the one point in the Five Points that people can't accept.

There are various reasons for this antipathy. One reason that the perseverance of the saints is rejected is the stress on man's alleged "free will" that some Christians have. They say that God's hands are tied, and so heaven and hell all hang on the decision of man. That is, if a man decides to walk away from Jesus, then God can do nothing. Others may disagree with this, but their suspicion about this teaching that a Christian cannot be lost is based on the fear that it will encourage presumption; a man who believes "once saved, always saved," they say, will think that he can live like the devil and still go to heaven.

All of us are exhorting one another to endure, aren't we? "Keep the faith ... keep going, sister ... hang in there, brother ... let's go on following the Lord Jesus." That is part of my ministry each Sunday. We take it on ourselves as 100 percent our own responsibility to look after ourselves, to watch and to pray. But we also believe that God is 100 percent faithful to us, that we are being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. What are our grounds for believing this? Here are six grounds for believing in the perseverance of the saints.

### **"MY SHEEP WILL NEVER PERISH"**

John 10:28–30 says, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one." Jesus is speaking of those blessed people whom His Father has given to Him, and yet the Father has never let go of them. It is like a child being given a helium balloon by his Daddy. In his excitement, the child lets go of the string, but the balloon doesn't float away up into the sky because the father is also hanging on to the further end of the string. In John 10, we are told that the hand of Jesus—that hand with the marks of the nail-print the hand on which our names are written in marks of indelible grace—that hand so holds on to us that no one can snatch

us away. Then we are told that no one can snatch us out of the Father's hand. Two hands are holding on to every true believer: the Father and the Son have us with a grip that will never let us go.

I heard one man huffing and puffing at this verse, objecting, "Yes, no one can snatch them out of God's hand ... but they can walk out of it themselves." Then what would happen? They would perish, but what does the Lord Jesus say in this text? "And they shall never perish." Four great words: "They shall never perish." It would seem to me that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is secure merely in the plain promise of those four words. Jesus does not give temporary life, or spasms of life, or a wee taste of life. Whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Surely the lucidity of the teaching of the Bible is telling us one truth, that all true Christians will persevere to the end.

### **PAUL TEACHES PERSEVERANCE**

The relationship of Paul to Jesus was a very close one. It was a relationship of love. Paul said in tones of wondering joy, "[He] loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). So Paul would find it emotionally impossible to contradict what his Lord taught. He could never oppose or misrepresent the beliefs of his Savior. The whole authority for his ministry had come to him from the Lord Jesus. He had commissioned him to be His apostle and plenipotentiary. "As the Father sent me," Jesus said, "so I'm sending you, Paul" (cf. John 20:21). So what Paul says, the Lord Christ endorses. "He who receives your words, Paul, receives my words," says Jesus (cf. John 13:20). There is not a membrane that you could put between the teaching of Jesus and Paul. So what does Paul say about the perseverance of the saints? In Philippians 1:6, Paul says, "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Consider a domestic appliance like a vacuum cleaner. It has to be switched on before anything can happen; the power has to come. So it is with us. The power that raised Jesus from the dead must be applied to us, or we'll be strangers to eternal life.

God is the one who switches the power on. God joins us to Jesus Christ. Or, as Paul says in our text, God begins this good work in His people. In other words, He is not a spectator, hanging around watching and waiting to see whether we will set off by ourselves in the Christian life. He initiates our spiritual concerns, our hunger, yearning, enlightenment, trust, repentance, and commitment. He begins this good work. He is the one who introduces us to real Christians. He persuades us to go to a gospel church.

He gives us a taste for the Bible. He bends our wills to do what the Bible teaches. He gives us faith in Jesus Christ. He is the one who starts the good work in us. More! He will carry it on to completion until when? Until we are grown up and mature? No. Until we get a job? No. Until we are married? No. Until we can think for ourselves? No. Until the day of Christ Jesus—that is, until the day when he comes and all his holy angels are with him. The one who began the good work in us all those years ago doesn't leave any job half done. He does a good and proper job in all His people. He goes on to complete the work He started.

How different from ourselves! Our lives are full of half-completed work, half-made garments, half-written books, half-finished do-it-yourself tasks. We begin, yes—it is so easy to begin a work and not complete it. God never does that. The God who began the work of creation day by day and finally completed it and said “very good” (Gen 1:31) also works in all those who are His new creation, and He will say about every one of them in the day of Christ, “Very good!”

In the old days there was such difficulty with our secondhand cars to start them on wet wintry days. Could we get them started? If we could only start them, then we could nurse them along until we got back home. I am saying to you that God has no starting problems. If He had, then none of us Christians would have been here tonight. But He could start the work in each of us.

Spurgeon heard the tale of the Roman Catholic religious man whose head was cut off but who then proceeded to pick up his own head and walk with it for a hundred miles. Spurgeon's response was to say, “I would have no problem believing that as long as he could take the first step.” God comes to us when our hearts are like stones, and we are living at enmity with Him, and the whole gospel seems foolishness to us. But God is so powerful that He has no difficulty in taking the very first step and beginning this glorious metamorphosis in our lives, making us new creations. Today, when we have the indwelling Christ and the knowledge that our sins have all been forgiven, how much easier it seems, humanly speaking, for Him to complete what He began in such unpromising circumstances.

### **PETER TEACHES PERSEVERANCE**

In 1 Peter 1:5, Peter says these familiar words: “kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (NKJV). You will remember the author of these words once warmed himself by a fire on a dark night in the midst of enemy territory. No one else around him was a believer in Jesus Christ, who had just

been arrested and was threatened with death. It was the dark night of the soul for Peter. Three times he was challenged to confess that he was a follower of our Lord. Three times he denied any knowledge of Jesus, the last time with cursings: “I never knew the blasted man. How many times do I have to tell you?”

If you had been there, you would have been shocked. You might have thought, “That Christian is lost. Gone forever.” But before us is a letter Peter wrote forty years later, a letter full of pastoral wisdom and hope. Peter, who then swore he was not a Christian, is still a Christian. How come? He had been kept by the power of God. What power is that? It made the universe. It sustains the cosmos. It raises Jesus from the dead. It consigns the devil to the bottomless pit. It is greater than all the powers in heaven, earth, and hell.

The power surrounding each believer is like a platoon of armed guards—each one is utterly omnipotent—who surround Miss Christian. Anything that approaches and threatens to destroy her has first to pass the platoon. “Stop! Who goes there? Identify yourself!” Each Christian is kept by divine omnipotence. Not each super-Christian, not each hyper-Christian, not each second blessing Christian, but the mere believer. Peter says that it is “through faith” we are kept by the power of God. In other words, as we keep trusting in Jesus, we are being kept.

Mr. Arthur Pink lived through World War 2 on the Isle of Lewis. He would take a brief walk from his flat to the harbor to purchase some fish. On one such walk he was greeted by a man who knew him: “Good morning Mr. Pink. How are you keeping?” “Not keeping, being kept,” was his terse reply, and the hard-working Mr. Pink kept walking.

How did the power of God keep Peter? Not from his fall. There is no promise in the Bible that a Christian will never fall. Rather, the opposite is true:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his word has no place in our lives. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. (1 John 1:8–2:1)

We are kept by the ministry of our advocate at God's



right-hand side. We are kept as we confess our sins to him, the one who is “faithful and just [to] forgive us our sins.”

That is what kept Peter. Jesus looked at Peter, and he wept bitterly. One look from Jesus, and our hearts are broken; another look, and our hearts are healed. There was no fun in swearing and denying that you knew Christ if it was going to be followed by days of guilt and depression. That was one of the ways God kept Peter and how He keeps all His people.

Soon the Lord recommissioned Peter, challenging him as to whether he loved Him. Of course Peter loved Him, more than anyone else in the world. So, the keeping Lord restored Peter and used him mightily on the Day of Pentecost. The keeping Lord has brought you here to the place where you are, and he is putting your life together for the full salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. Until when will He keep you? Until you get His full salvation! Until the last time.

### **CONFORMED TO THE LIKENESS OF CHRIST**


I am quoting from the majestic eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans and verses 29 and 30: “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many

brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” These words are called the “golden chain.” God has loved people before they love him.

When hanging on Golgotha’s cruel cross, our Lord was loving Saul of Tarsus. That was a couple of years before Saul began to love Jesus in return. On the cross, Jesus foreknew Paul, and later the apostle realized that and wrote, “He loved me and gave himself for me.”

What was that love of God going to do? It was going to predestine Paul to be conformed to the likeness of God’s Son. God had made up His mind that this old persecutor, who for so long had kicked against the goads, would be like Jesus. Paul was going to be transformed morally and spiritually and even physically so that every vestige of sin would be removed from him and all the beauties of every single grace would fill him and make him a transcript of Christ.

How would God do it? He tells us in that great text in Romans 8; He would summon him to Himself, calling him by name—“Saul, Saul”—and stopping him short on the road to Damascus. Then He would declare him righteous in Jesus Christ, all his sins forgiven and justified freely through the Savior, and finally, He would glorify Paul. Calling, justification, and glorification are the three pivotal



**Calling, justification,  
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elements in the conversion of any Christian, and they are all done by God in grace to us.

Glorification? But surely that is a future work, and Paul was far from being in a state of glory when he wrote this letter, probably in the year 55, to the congregation in Rome. He was still doing battle with the world, remaining sin, and the devil.

Glorification is the consummation of salvation, but Paul wrote it in the past tense, which intimates the certainty of its accomplishment. We shall be glorified as certainly as we are now justified. Future glorification is so necessary and certain that it appears to the Christian as already given and completed.


Where is the mere Christian today? The Bible gives us a staggering answer, an incredible reply to that question in Ephesians 2:6. We could not believe it unless we had it plainly written before us in this verse: “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.” What is Paul talking about? The union of the people of God with their Savior—“us with him.”

The church, the body of Christ, is always joined to its Head. You cannot conceive of the people of God without their Head. “What God has joined together let no man put

asunder.” They are joined to their Head forever by bonds of unbreakable love. Where their Head is, there you will find them, too. Their Head once fulfilled all righteousness as He walked this earth, and so they are righteous in Him. Their Head once suffered the anathema of God on the cross of Calvary, and they also suffered that condemnation in Him there. Their Head lay in the grave but then rose and ascended to heaven, and they also rose and ascended with Him. Now their Head is seated at the right hand of God in glory, and they are seated there in Him. They are forgiven in Him; more than conquerors in Him; righteous in Him; ascended in Him; glorified in Him. God has predestined them to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, and so they shall all be.

### CHRIST'S CONTINUAL INTERCESSION

The writer of Hebrews said, “He is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Heb 7:25). You will remember that when He led a group of disciples in Galilee, He would pray for them. There was a time when Satan came and tested Simon Peter. It was the worst experience that Peter had gone through. It was cowardice and failure and shame and guilt and despair. More than that, it was an



**We shall be glorified as certainly as we are now justified. Future glorification is so necessary and certain that it appears to the Christian as already given and completed.**



experience Peter had been prepared for by the Lord Jesus. The danger had been made clear, but Peter was too full of his ability to keep standing to pay attention to those “needless concerns” of his teacher. “I can cope with anything,” he was telling Jesus. “I will follow you to death if that should be required.” But Peter fell cataclysmically and afterwards broke His heart.

When Judas betrayed Jesus, he became suicidal, but Peter repented and was restored because he went to God through Jesus Christ. Judas went to the chief priests and tried to give the money back, but Peter ran to the empty tomb on the first day of the week and later was re-commissioned by Jesus. What kept Peter through his failure? The intercession of Christ. He warned Peter of the trials ahead, and that Satan had him, and then Jesus added, “But I have prayed for you ... that your faith does not fail” (Luke 22:32). This is what kept Peter.

The writer to the Hebrews tells them that our Lord Jesus Christ has not changed. Now exalted and seated in the midst of the throne of God, He lives to intercede for everyone who comes to God by Him. We earnestly pray for a missionary friend for a time, but then we get weary, and the weeks go by, and we stop praying. Jesus stops never! He “always lives to intercede” for us. Nothing can stop Him. If the United Nations sent rockets with nuclear warheads against Him, they could not remove Him. If all the powers of hell ganged together and declared a jihad against Him, He could not be dislodged from His place as the supremo of heaven, earth, and hell. While many things stop us praying for one another, He never ceases to pray for you and me. He knows all about us and the troubles we’ve seen.

Our great High Priest cries to God on our behalf. Christ prays for someone growing cold, stopping attending church, starting to doubt again. He intercedes for a

housebound person feeling so lonely and troubled. He prays for those with no understanding, asking that they might see, and those with no assurance, that they might know that God loves them, and for those passing through sore temptation, that they will be kept from the Evil One. He is praying for each one of us that our faith will not fail and that we be brought safe home to glory to see Him as He is and know Him wiping the tears from our eyes. He longs that all whom the Father has given Him will be with Him in heaven and see His glory, and when He prays that prayer, He doesn't begin it by saying, "If it is possible..." or "If it is your will..." He knows that our salvation is possible and that our glorification is God's will, and so there are no qualification at all when He asks for us to get to glory. How can God deny His Son anything He asks Him for?

### THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30). Paul's plea that Christians should behave in a godly and holy way is based on the fact that the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, permanently indwells the believer. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. He has moved into your life forever. God has sent Him individually and personally as the divine seal that announces to men and angels that henceforth you belong to God.

A seal is a mark of ownership authenticity. The deeds of a property have a wax seal that state whose house it is. Sheep in the hills around us are marked by their masters as belonging to them and not the farmer across the valley. Such seals are all external, but God's seal is the Holy Spirit Himself, and He indwells our hearts, marking us as His own forever. This seal is God's "guarantee" or pledge by which He undertakes to bring His people safely to the tremendous day of full redemption that lies before us. We now have the Holy Spirit as a wonderful foretaste of future glory.

If I'm buying a house for the first time, I am unlikely to be able to raise all the payment. What I do is give a down payment as a pledge that I fully intend to pay off the rest of the price month by month. Now, our Savior tells us that in His Father's house are many mansions or rooms (John 14:2), and one of them is for each of us, but the wonder is this, that God doesn't ask us to make a down payment on that mansion. He doesn't say, "Give ten thousand pounds to a missionary society," or tell us to work in an AIDS hospital for five years in South Africa or preach on a street corner every Saturday for a year. He asks for no seal or pledge from us. It is He who gives us a pledge that He is going to

keep us until the day of redemption, and the seal is not an experience of His love; the seal is God Himself, God the Holy Spirit, indwelling our lives. If He has come, then we are safe until the day of redemption.

So, do not grieve Him by your sins. Walk in the Spirit; thank God for the Spirit. You have this hope of being found blameless on the day of redemption, so purify yourselves in heart, mind, and affection.

### CONCLUSION

These six Scriptures (and there are many more) teach two great principles; the first is that all who are savingly joined to Christ are kept by Him until the day of redemption. The second is that only those who do not quench the Holy Spirit but who persevere in faith and holiness and obedience have any grounds to believe that they are being preserved. We are back with that great statement of Jesus that He who endures to the end shall be saved (Matt 24:13).

There is a sevenfold refrain in the letters to the seven congregations in the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation; promises of blessing are made "to him that overcomes." If you capitulate to unbelief, reneging on your faith in Christ and thus showing that you have been overcome by the world, then you will go to hell. God's preserving work comes to light only in our persevering in trusting and obeying the Savior. I have no grounds to claim, "God is preserving me because 'once saved, always saved'" if I am not persevering in trusting in Christ and resisting temptation and in asking God for mercy and grace to help me in every time of need. I may be just a stony ground hearer; I may just have historic faith, not saving faith.

How is any one of us going to persevere in a world full of evil influences? Our hope can only be in the promises of God that sinners like me whose trust is in His Son shall be divinely kept until the end. That is the ground of my confidence, and so I keep plodding on. Only thus can I have confidence that I am infallibly going to heaven. That is my certain destination, and so I purify myself as God is pure in preparation for arriving in that happy place.

There are two enemies facing me; the first is a presumption, but to deliver me from that I know I have to keep on persevering in holy living. The other enemy is despair, and to deliver me from that are the wonderful promises of God to take all His people to heaven, even if their faith is as thin as a spider's thread, just as long as it is lodged in Jesus. Then I shall be safe! ♦

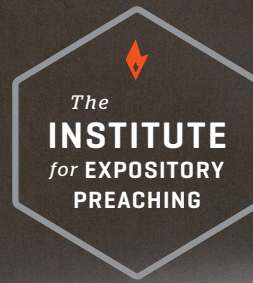


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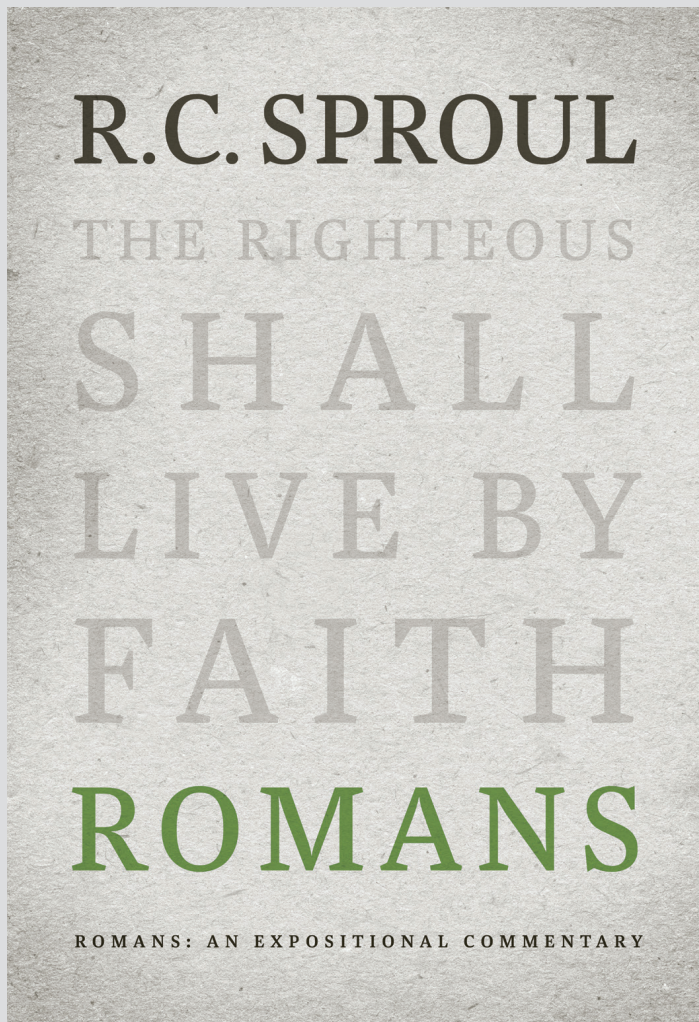
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OnePassion Ministries has partnered with Ligonier Ministries to host events to equip and encourage anyone who teaches and preaches the Word of God. Our goal is to encourage pastors, church leaders, Bible teachers, and those interested in the ministry of biblical preaching to stand strong and to equip them to correctly exposit the Word of God. Dr. Steven Lawson will gather with pastors, church leaders, Bible teachers, and anyone interested in the ministry of biblical preaching and teach multiple sessions on expository preaching.

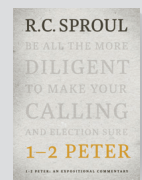
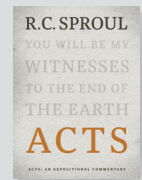
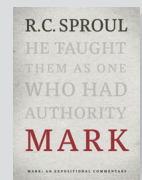
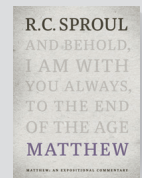
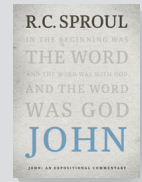
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