

God's Sovereignty and Your Salvation, Part 9

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[We're going to be looking at] Luke 10, believe it or not, verses 21–24, for the last Sunday. This is going to be the last and sad sermon. It's actually an encouraging sermon, but it's sad to finish the series on God's sovereignty and your salvation. We've come to an end of our major doctrine rope, and so we are going to continue on [in Luke after this sermon]. At the end of August, we will have a few question-and-answer times, so be thinking of some Bible questions as you will have an opportunity to submit those soon.

Augustine is one of the most well known of all the early church fathers, probably because of his work called *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, which millions have read. He wrote quite a few works, but that's probably his most popular. He lived from AD 354–430 and was the bishop of Hippo. [During Augustine's lifetime], Rome was sacked by barbarians [and] many fled to Africa. One of [those] refugees was a man named Pelagius, [who] promoted an ascetic, monastic lifestyle. If you're thinking, "What's that?" it's [a lifestyle in which you] deny yourself pleasure, get away from people, go build a monastery in the desert, get away from the corruption of the world. It's really a futile attempt at sanctification by isolation.

Pelagius had a following, and he taught his followers several key things. First, that Adam died not because he had sinned, but merely because he

was mortal. Second, that people are born innocent, perfectly innocent, like Adam and Eve were before the Fall, and that they only become sinners after they sin. They aren't born with Adam's sin and guilt imputed to them. Third, that a person, even after sinning, could achieve perfection and obey all the commands of God perfectly. Fourth, and finally, that man can achieve salvation by works apart from God's grace.

If you have ever read [about], or heard someone talk about Pelagianism, now you know what they're talking about. Pelagianism still exists today, mostly among unbelievers who see themselves as pretty good, moral people, that mankind is generally good, and [who believe that] if there is a God—[they] don't know—and [they] get to heaven, He's going to look at [their lives], and He's going to say, "You know what? Your good deeds have, for the most part, outweighed your bad deeds. Come on in, old buddy, old pal." That's how they look at it: like God is not all that strict, if He even exists. Men want to think that they're basically good, that they can please God on their own, and that they don't need God's grace. This is at the heart of what Jesus was talking about in our text, when [He] talks about the Father hiding the truth from the "wise and intelligent." These [people] are the wise and intelligent.

Through the efforts of Augustine, these views were condemned as heresy at the church council of Carthage in AD 411. Then, for eighteen years after that, until the end of his life, Augustine wrote works refuting Pelagianism and its false views. Augustine refuted Pelagians by showing from the Scriptures that: 1) Adam died because of his sin; 2) men are born with the sin and guilt of Adam imputed to them; and [3]) that the only way a person can be saved and/or please God is by God's grace. Augustine taught that Christians could not achieve perfection in this life, as all continue to sin against God. Undergirding all that Augustine taught was the view of God's sovereignty in salvation. The sovereignty of God in both saving people and sanctifying them, or helping them grow in holiness, is what Augustine championed because he saw it all the way through Scripture. Augustine rightly taught that the grace of God was sovereign over

men; that men could not overcome God's absolute will or decree, which was established before creation; and men submit to God's will, God never submits to man's will.

After Pelagianism was condemned as a heresy—Augustine wrote thirteen books to refute it, [and] he even died writing another—another view arose, which [used] some of the teachings of Pelagius. This view became known as the semi-Pelagian view, which is very popular today. Most [semi-Pelagians] don't know they're semi-Pelagians, but after I describe what the semi-Pelagians believe, you'll see how many [people] actually fit quite well into this category. The semi-Pelagians teach that men, not God, take the first step in the salvation process—that men, on their own, unaided by the grace of God, seek God. Then God responds to what men desire to do. Semi-Pelagians also teach that after being saved, men are responsible to persevere to the end, that though salvation is by grace, it is kept by works. In other words, you can lose, or forfeit, or hand back, or reject, your salvation and become unsaved. In order to make sure that you get to heaven, you need to keep on confessing, or doing sacraments, or last rites, or something, in order to keep you on your way to heaven.

Well, as is always the case, bad doctrines [such as this one] die hard. Though the Pelagian heresy took a big hit, mostly [at] the hands of Augustine and the early church, semi-Pelagian views continue and are widespread today. Semi-Pelagians teach that predestination, election, [and] foreknowledge are merely God looking into the future and seeing what men are going to do so that He can respond to men seeking and choosing Him. In the end, the security of one's salvation depends not on God, but on [your] own effort. You are saved, supposedly, by God's grace and your works, and then kept by God's grace and your works. This is the view of the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist denomination, the Nazarene denomination, and some so-called Baptists, who teach that men first seek God, and then God responds to men—that God, in eternity past, didn't choose who He was going to save, but He look[ed] and [saw] who [was] going to choose Him, and then He [said], “Well, since they're choosing Me, I'll choose them in

response.” Salvation is by grace, [semi-Pelagians] say, but [they] add that men are required to take part and contribute at the beginning, and in the middle, and at the end.

In a nutshell, Pelagians see men as morally healthy. Semi-Pelagians see men as a little sick. The biblical view is [that men] are spiritually dead before coming to Christ. That is the view of Augustine, it's the view of the Reformers, it's what the Scriptures teach, and we've seen that in the first several sermons of this series. There is also a progression in these views from man's sovereignty and then to God, or from God's sovereignty to man's. The biblical view is [that] God is sovereign and men are not. The Pelagian view is that men are sovereign and God is not.

It is this last issue—this whole business of keeping your salvation—that I want to talk about. Are you saved by grace and then kept by works, or kept by grace plus works, which is to be kept by works, or not? If you have been here for the last eight sermons, you know that Calvary Bible Church teaches the Augustinian view, the view of the Reformers, the Presbyterians, the Puritans, and the correct Baptists. [They teach that] once a person is saved, he remains saved and will forever be saved, and that nothing can make him become not saved again. This is the doctrine of what is called “eternal security,” or, as some call it, the “perseverance of the saints.” The doctrine is very encouraging. It's very comforting. [We'll] go through it this morning, [and] you're going to leave here, [exclaiming], “Praise God!” That's why I saved it until the end of the series. [This doctrine] admits that salvation is by grace and grace alone.

Let's start with our [Luke 10] text again, read it one more time, and then we will jump in to this really neat and encouraging doctrine. Look at Luke 10:21 and follow along as I read through verse 24:

At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, “I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was

well-pleasing in Your sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” Turning to the disciples, He said privately, ”Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them.”

In this text, Jesus praises God for His sovereignty. We’ve seen this from about every angle. [God] is hiding the truth from the wise and intelligent, [and] He is revealing it to infants. The wise and intelligent are those who don’t think they need God, or [who] think they can help God out in salvation.

This morning, I want to tackle this one last doctrine of eternal security or, as others call it, the “perseverance of the saints,” which is really not the perseverance of the saints at all, but the perseverance of God to keep the saints. I want to address three issues. First, I want to do a quick survey of those texts that the semi-Pelagians use to justify that a person can lose his salvation. I wish I had time to exegete each passage, but it would take a sermon for each, so we’re just going to have to do a very quick survey. [Second], we are going to look at the Scriptures [that] actually address the perseverance of the saints, and you’ll see why going into all that detail was not necessary. [Third], we are going to look at the doctrinal catastrophe that happens when you deny the eternal security of the believer. That’s going to be our plan. Let’s jump in. Get your Bibles ready [because] we’ll be all over the place [in them]. If you have a new Bible, it won’t be new after this morning.

[First, we are going to look at] the Scripture texts people use to say you can lose salvation. I just want to say a couple [of] things first. First of all, there’s a group [of people] in the Scriptures who come into the church [and] who call themselves Christians, who seem to be Christians, [and] who

seem to be saved. Maybe they get involved, maybe they teach a Bible study, maybe they grow in knowledge, and then all of a sudden, there's a point in their lives when they just say, "Christianity is a joke. I don't believe in [it]. I'm walking away from Christ." They go what is called "apostate." We're not talking about those people.

Second, there's another group [of people of whom] the Scriptures speak, which we're going to encounter in the book of Hebrews, [who] might be called "religious investigators." Maybe they're interested in Christianity [and] they want to find out what the Bible teaches. Maybe they live in the neighborhood over here, and they [think], "I wonder what's going on in that big church. I'm just going to show up there some Sunday and see what happens." They come, they're interested, they [think], "Man, I didn't know this is what happens [in church]," and they stick around. They investigate, they learn about Christianity, but then after a while, they walk away. We're not talking about those [people] either.

We're talking about the hypothetical group of people who supposedly actually become saved, are born again, are chosen, elect, predestined before the foundation of the world [see Ephesians 1:4], are transformed into new creatures in Christ [see 2 Corinthians 5:17], and then become unsaved. Those are the people we're talking about now as we look at these Scripture texts [that] supposedly teach that that can be true. As a matter of fact, those who believe you can lose your salvation believe that all Christians lose their salvation at various intervals.

Can [you] imagine how bad [it] would be to think that every time you sinned you lost your salvation? Would that scare you? I don't know about you, [but] I'd be unsaved most of the time. Think about it. You'd be schizophrenic. You would say, "OK, that was a bad thought. Oh! I lost my salvation. OK, OK, Lord, I confess that sin. Oh, good, I'm glad I did that. Oh! That was prideful. Lord, I confess that I was just prideful!" Pretty soon you're confessing and repenting of your repentance. Why? [It is] because you have to stay saved, and if you don't keep yourself saved, you won't get to heaven. That is a scary proposition. It's demonic. Yet, people go to

different Scriptures, and they find different phrases, and they [think], “Ah, ha!” and like always, they ignore the contexts.

[Turn to] Matthew 10:22. [In this section of Matthew], Jesus [is] sending His disciples into ministry, warning them of the costs of discipleship, telling them they will be persecuted, they will be killed, they will be brought before judges, and it's going to be very difficult for them. Then He says this in Matthew 10:22: “You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.” [Those who believe salvation can be lost say], “There it is: [if] you don't endure, you're not going [to heaven].” As a matter of fact, there is a [virtually] identical phrase in Matthew 24:13, where Jesus is speaking of the Tribulation and those who are being persecuted as believers during the Tribulation. He says the exact same thing: “the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.” First of all, Jesus isn't saying, “I command you to endure to the end.” He's just making a statement of fact that those who endure the suffering they're going to receive for being Christians will be saved. In both texts, He is speaking of believers who are being persecuted, and He says, “Be encouraged. You're going to have to endure this trial, but you're going to be saved at the end.” That's all He's saying. He's not giving a condition, He's not saying, “Listen, man, I died on the cross for you. I brought you to salvation, now you better keep your salvation.” He's not saying that.

There's a similar statement found in Revelation 2:10. You can turn there. This is in one of the letters to the churches—the church of Smyrna. In Revelation 2:10, Jesus says to the church of Smyrna: “Do not fear what you are about to suffer.” Notice that in Matthew 10, Matthew 24, and Revelation 2, Jesus is speaking to believers in all three instances, and [He] is giving them encouragement in all three instances. “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” [Revelation 2:10]. His whole point here is: “Listen, you are going to be tested. You are going to be thrown into prison. You're going to suffer trials. Just be faithful,

you're going to get that crown of life." He's not saying, "If you don't do this, you're not going to get the crown of life." That is reading what the text does not say.

Turn to Hebrews 6:4–6. By the way, in the letters in Revelation, there are a whole bunch of phrases like that: "the one who endures to the end," or "the one who holds fast," or whatever. They are all encouraging comments. Hebrews 6:4–6 is a little bit more formidable. You may have had people [turn to this text when they] try to show you that you can lose your salvation. This is one of the five warning texts in the book of Hebrews where the author periodically stops his argument [about] Jesus to address some Jewish fence sitters. These are Jews who have seen what's going on with this Christianity thing, they've come into the church, they're hanging around, they're hearing the gospel, they're seeing the miracles, they're witnessing all of this, and they're [thinking], "Hmmm. I wonder if I should do this or not. I wonder if I should commit to Christ or not. It seems like if I do I'll be persecuted. It seems like [if] I do, there will be all these people [who] will reject me because I'd have to turn my back on my own people." There's a lot of pressure [on them] not to believe. So the author of Hebrews stops in five different places in the book and tries to push these people off the fence into believing in Jesus. [Hebrews 6:4–6] is one of them. He says here:

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 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, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

There are several phrases [that] at first glance seem to indicate that a believer is being described: "they have once been enlightened," "have tasted of the heavenly gift," "have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit," "tasted

the good word of God and the powers of the age to come.” It is argued [by semi-Pelagians] that these phrases refer to believers who, after being saved, sin and fall away, or lose their salvation. That is clear from the end of the text, which says: “It is impossible to renew them again to repentance.” Yet all of those phrases describe with perfect clarity Jews who were involved in the New Testament church, who saw the miracles, heard the inspired preaching, saw what God was doing, and [who] were [still just] hanging around.

[First], they had full revelation—they were enlightened to the truth of the gospel. Jesus is that “Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man” [John 1:9]. The apostles went out and spread that Light around so that [these fence-sitting Jews] were enlightened. They understood the truth of the gospel; they heard the gospel. [Second, those Jews] were “made partakers of the Holy Spirit,” but notice [that] it doesn’t say they *received* the Holy Spirit, or [that] they were indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but [that] they *partook* in the miracles—the inspired preaching of the apostles that was happening in that early church. [Third], they had a taste of the heavenly gift. That is, they didn’t fully receive it, they didn’t swallow it, [but] they were able to experience the gifts these believers had in the early church. The believers were using these gifts in the power of the Holy Spirit, and [the unbelieving Jews] were able to experience all of that. Fourth, they tasted the “good word of God.” Again, they didn’t swallow it; they just kind of put the gospel on their tongue, rolled it around, and then spit it out. It wasn’t for them.

The point is this: If you reject the gospel, that’s bad. If you reject the gospel that is delivered by an inspired preacher, like the apostles, that’s worse. [If] you reject the gospel in the context of the church, after being around believers, after hearing inspired gospel preaching, *and* [seeing] many, many miracles, it’s over for you because you will never receive that much revelation again. You will never have as clear a testimony to the power of God and the gospel of God as receiving all of that information. That’s why [the author of Hebrews] says: “it is impossible to renew them

again to repentance.” What’s ironic here is that people who say this verse teaches [that] you can lose your salvation often say [that] if you confess your sins you can get it back. Well, no, you can’t. If what [the text] means [is that you can lose your salvation], the text [also] says “it is impossible [to renew them again to repentance],” which means [it is] “impossible.” You can never get it back. [If] you lose your salvation once, it’s over, *if* that’s what that [text] means, but it doesn’t.

Another text people use as a proof text of the semi-Pelagian view is over a couple chapters in [Hebrews] 10:26–29. Here, the author of Hebrews says, starting in verse 26:

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

[When] you read a text like that, you may think, “Well, I don’t know what that means, but it doesn’t sound good.” It’s not. It’s bad. It is pointed out that the author of Hebrews uses “we” and that he is saying “we believers,” when he says “if we go on sinning willfully,” and then describes that “if we sin willfully after we receive the knowledge of the truth, then there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.” That’s bad. The only thing you can look forward to is a certain “terrifying expectation of judgment,” [which is a] synonym for hell, and “the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.” [That’s] bad. “Obviously,” [the semi-Pelagians] say, “the people here were saved, and then they became unsaved.”

Let's step back and ask ourselves about those little warning sections [the author of Hebrews interjects into his writing]. This is another one. Who was being referred to here? Jews. Who was the author? A Jew. And so, the "we" here is not "we believers," but "we Jews." He's saying to those fence sitters, "Pals, listen to me. Jesus is the only sacrifice. If you come into the church, if you understand Jesus, and His death, His burial, His resurrection, [and] if you reject that, you're rejecting the only sacrifice that can ever save you. That is it. [If] you reject the sacrifice of Jesus and go back to killing animals, do you know what you're doing? You are trampling underfoot the Son of God. You are regarding as unclean that precious blood of Christ, which inaugurated the very new covenant [of which] you long to partake. There's nothing left for you but a certain 'terrifying expectation of judgment.'" That's what he's saying.

Jesus, in His high-priestly prayer in John 17:19, said: "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." The word "sanctification" means "to set yourself apart from, or set yourself apart to" something. In Jesus' case, He came to live a perfect life and die on the cross. Every time we have communion, we read the text, "And He took the cup and He said, 'This is the new covenant in My blood. Do this in remembrance of Me'" [see 1 Corinthians 11:25]. Jesus, in His death, instituted the new covenant. The author of Hebrews is saying, "Listen, if we go on sinning willfully, that is, you won't repent and believe in Jesus, do you know what you're doing? You're just setting yourself up in the bull's eye of God's judgment. You have nothing to look forward to but a 'terrifying expectation of judgment' because what you've done is you have regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which He, that is Jesus, set Himself apart to accomplish—inaugurate—by coming to earth, and you have trampled Him underfoot. That is, [you have] regarded Jesus as worthless, and I'm telling you, there is judgment and judgment only waiting for you." It doesn't mean that they were saved and then lost their salvation.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 15, [which is] another text [with which] I think most of [you], if you've known Christ for a while, are familiar. This is

the beginning of the great chapter on the resurrection. Before we read the verses, I just want to [give] you a little background. Paul, in this chapter, is going to argue that the resurrection and faith [in] the resurrection are necessary qualifications for salvation and that if you don't believe in the resurrection, your faith is worthless, vain, of no account.

Let's look at [1 Corinthians 15:]1–2, which is also tortured to try and teach [that] you can lose your salvation. Verse 1: "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved," presently, "if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain." Some people say, "Ah, ha! *You* have to hold on to the truth, and if you don't, your belief is in vain." Well, kind of. Paul is summarizing the gospel message in verses 3–4, but he says here, "If you hold fast the word which I preached to you," and he just said they were standing in it, and they received it, and were saved by it, so they were. He says, "Unless you believe in vain," and the implied answer is: of course you didn't believe in vain in the resurrection because he goes [on] to explain that in great detail in the whole rest of the chapter.

Paul is merely saying, "Listen, you haven't believed in vain because you are holding to what I taught, and you are saved by what I taught. You haven't believed in vain. The resurrection is not in vain."

The false teachers were coming in, and saying, "The resurrection is a vain thought."

Paul is saying, "No! You're saved by it, unless you believed in some vain gospel, some non-saving gospel." You'd be like those people in Matthew 7:[22] who come to Jesus, and say, "Lord, Lord, have we not..." Did they believe in Jesus? Yes. Were they saved? No. They had a vain faith. [It was] a faith, but it was like the faith that demons have, the faith that James describes in James 2:19, when he says [that] even the demons believe in God. Sure, they have a faith, a mental assent to the facts, but Paul is saying, "If you've received and you've been saved, the word I've preached to you is not in vain." [The phrase] "unless you believe in vain" is a rhetori-

cal statement of “of course it’s not.” That’s all he’s saying. He’s not saying, “OK, if you don’t continue to hold fast to the word it’s over for you. The gospel becomes void.” No.

OK, enough tortured interpretations of texts. Now, what we need to do is we need to look at a few texts (I’m sorry we can’t look at all of them, but we’ll look at plenty) to make [our second] point [that] God’s Word says [that] you can never lose your salvation. The Bible teaches that once you are saved you can never hand back, reject, forfeit, give up, walk away from, or anything else to become unsaved. This is called the “doctrine of eternal security,” or the “perseverance of saints,” or, better, “the perseverance of God in the saints.” We’re going to look at multiple texts [that support this doctrine].

The first one I want you to turn to is Jeremiah 32:40. We just talked about the inauguration of the new covenant, [and] Jeremiah talks about that in Jeremiah 31:31, but he also talks about it here in Jeremiah 32:40. This was the covenant everybody was waiting for. Do you know why? This [verse gives us] one of the reasons. [In] Jeremiah 32:40, God says this: “I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.” Did you see that? Who is putting the fear of God in their hearts? God is. What is the consequence of that? They will not turn away. God is the one who is working to make sure those He saves stay saved.

Turn over to John 6. We’ve looked at this whole chapter, and surveyed many of these verses, but I’m just going to look at one [verse]: John 6:39. Notice what John writes here. Jesus is speaking, [and says]: “This is the will of Him who sent Me,” notice whose will this is—God’s will—“that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.” Here we learn that Jesus loses none who are given to Him. All are raised up on that final day of glory. Now, if that was the only verse in the Bible, you could say, “OK, it’s finished. We’re eternally secure. It says so right there

crystal clearly, straightforwardly, in the context of God preserving those He saves.”

Turn over to John 10. If that [verse in John 6] isn't good enough, [there] is a whole arsenal here in John 10:27. In the preceding context, Jesus describes Himself as the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep [see 10:10], [and] that no one can come into the sheepfold except through Him [see 10:9]. Now He's going to explain why He's the good shepherd. You see, good shepherds take care of their sheep, don't they? They protect the sheep. One of the primary duties of the shepherd is to feed and protect. Jesus is saying, “[If] you come into my sheepfold, no one is going to get you.” He says this, starting in verse 27:

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 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. I and the Father are one.
[10:27–30]

Jesus' sheep hear His voice. Jesus' sheep follow and obey Him. Jesus' sheep are given the free gift of eternal life. They never perish. No one can snatch them out of His hand, no one can snatch them out of His Father's hand, and by the way, He and the Father are one in this, keeping them protected. That's as clear as you can get.

Turn over to Romans 8. We've looked at this before in the sermon on predestination, but I want to just point out some things again. In every one of these texts, how many times are the sheep mentioned as those who preserve themselves? Zero. This [verse in Romans 8] is no exception. Look at Romans 8:29[-30]. If you write in your Bible, you might want to do a little circling or underlining here. “For those whom He,” you could circle that little “He,” “foreknew, He,” you could circle that, “also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the first-born among many brethren; and these whom He,” you could circle that,

“predestined, He,” you could circle that, “also called; and these whom He,” you could circle that, “called, He,” you could circle that, “also justified; and these whom He,” you could circle that, “justified,” then you could circle, “He also glorified.” Guess who does that? It’s not you. It’s not me. God’s doing everything from stem to stern, from predestination to glorification. God is the one who is sovereign in salvation. You don’t have to worry about God dropping the ball—He is perfectly faithful.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 1. This is the introduction to the letter, [where] Paul is saying some nice, cozy things. He’s talking about Jesus [at] the end of verse 7, and then he says, in verse 8: the Lord Jesus Christ “who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” Notice that Jesus is the one who confirms you to the end, blameless, until the day of the Lord Jesus, and *God* is faithful who makes all this happen. I love what Paul tells Timothy: “even when we are faithless, God remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself” [see 2 Timothy 2:13]. You cannot sin your way out of salvation. God is faithful; God brings it to pass, not you.

Look over at Ephesians 4:30. There is a similar verse in chapter 1:13–14, [which] talks about being sealed with the Holy Spirit. This [verse in Ephesians 4] is just one of them—we don’t have time to look at all the texts. Look at [Ephesians 4:]30. Paul is speaking about the believer’s walk, and he says this: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,” who, of course, indwells every believer, “by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” Do you see that? “Sealed for the day of redemption.” What does this “sealing” thing have to do with it? Some of you may have those really trick letter things that used to be popular, where you drip a little wax [on a letter or envelope] and [then you] put your little cutesy seal on there. Then you mail [it] to somebody, and he [says], “Oh, I received a letter from so-and-so, and it’s got this neat, little wax seal on the back that I’ve got to break in order to see what’s inside. I hate to do that, but that’s the way it is.”

[At the time when Ephesians was being written], those seals were very popular. The seal represented ownership and possession. [If] you put your seal on a document [or] letter, you were saying, “This is mine, my possession. I own this.” Paul, taking that same imagery, says that you are not to be grieving, sinning against, the Holy Spirit who indwells you because the Holy Spirit owns you, has sealed you, has made you His possession, until the day of redemption. The only way you could become unsaved is if you could beat up the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is pretty strong—all-strong, all-powerful. It can't be done.

Turn to Philippians 1:6, a page or two over to the right. Paul, again, encouraging the Philippians, says in Philippians 1:6: “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” Who begins the work? God. Who perfects it? God. How long does He perfect that work? Until the day of Christ Jesus. What can stop it? Nothing, unless you can beat up God. You can't.

Turn to 1 Thessalonians, a couple books over—Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians 5. Toward the very end of the book, right as he's getting ready to close the book, [the author is] going to say a few words to encourage the Thessalonians. This is what he says [in] verse[s] 23-[24]: “Now may the God of peace Himself,” whenever you see that “Himself” there, that tells you it's emphatic, absolutely certain. “May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is” that person who works really hard? No. “Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.” Again, we're not even in here as doing anything but receiving God's sovereign preservation. God Himself, emphatic, is sanctifying you; [He] makes sure you get to perfection in heaven; God Himself preserves your soul, spirit, and body; [and] God is faithful, not only to call [people] to salvation, but to bring their salvation to pass so that they will get to heaven.

Turn to 1 Peter 5. [This] is toward the end of his book also, [where Peter] is teaching on the theme of suffering. He wants to give his read-

ers a little encouragement, and he says this [in] verse 10: “After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will *Himself* perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you” [emphasis added]. Again, [there is] the emphatic statement that God will *Himself* do this. All of these texts, and many others, teach what we have been studying all along, and learning all along: God is sovereign in salvation—not only to call, not only to save, but also to preserve those He has saved for all eternity.

Let’s just say that you still aren’t convinced. Maybe there’s this lingering doubt in your mind, [that makes you think], “Jack, maybe we could take all of the verses you just quoted and we just looked at, and maybe we could reinterpret them all so that they don’t actually mean what they appear to be saying. Then all those verses that we looked at [that] *seem* to say that you might be able to lose your salvation actually mean [that] you *can* lose your salvation. What about that?” No. No, that doesn’t work, either. This is why.

Third point: Rejecting perseverance causes doctrinal catastrophe. Do you remember when [I said] that the doctrines of salvation are like this huge tapestry and they’re all interwoven? We used that illustration. [Do you remember that] what we’re doing in this series is we’re trying to pull out a single thread, artificially speaking, and just look at it in isolation of all the others, but that you really can’t do that because if you pull on a string like that it creates a huge snag? Well, I’m going to show you the huge snag that happens if you say you can lose your salvation. It’s monstrous.

Let me just ask you some questions. Are believers predestined before the [foundation] of the world, elected, foreknown, and chosen by God unto salvation? Yes. If you could lose your salvation, then that means you would have to be un-predestined, un-chosen, un-elected, un-foreknown before the foundation of the world. That just doesn’t work. How could that be? Remember, you come to Christ, you believe, and God says, “Chosen before the foundation of the world.” Well, then, if you could sin and lose your salvation, God [would have to say], “Oh, just kidding!” Then [if] you confess [your sin], [He would have to say], “No, I was telling the truth.” See, He’d

have to go back and forth—He would become very schizophrenic. You're chosen, not chosen, chosen, not chosen, predestined, not predestined, yes, no, yes, no. It just doesn't work. You're either chosen before the foundation of the world, or you're not chosen before the foundation of the world. You can't be both. You either are, or you're not. It just doesn't work [otherwise]. If you're [a] semi-Pelagian, you believe [that] you lose your salvation [until] you confess your sins, [so] you have to be re-predestined, re-chosen, re-elected, and re-foreknown, and then "un" every one of those things every time you sin, which is a lot, and then "re" every time you confess, which, if you're good [about] confessing, would be a lot. It just can't be. It's [an] impossible thought.

Are believers born again by the Holy Spirit when they're saved? Yes. We're born again, we're regenerated, we're made into new creatures [see 2 Corinthians 5:17]. Who does this? God. When you go into the little kids' Sunday school classes, and you ask them questions, what are the two answers they always give you? God and Jesus. I want you to know, those are right answers most of the time, as we will see. God is the one who causes believers to be regenerated, born again, made into new creatures. Think about this. If you could lose your salvation, the moment you lost your salvation you'd have to become an old creature again. All the old things that passed away would have to wash back in. You'd have to be unborn born again. You'd have to be de-regenerated into a child of Satan.

Who is the one who causes you to be born again? God. He would have to be the one who causes you to be un-born again, and He's not doing it—we already saw that. [Do] you think you can undo [your salvation]? Try this sometime—try being not born physically. That's difficult, isn't it? It's impossible, just like it's impossible for you to be unborn spiritually. Once you're born, you're born. If you could confess your sins and get saved again, all these things would have to be reversed all over again. It's ridiculous.

Who justifies us and declares us to be right before God? God does, based on the work of Christ. Who performs that one-time, legal declaration, once-for-all, that the believer is now perfectly right before God? It's God.

If you could lose your salvation, you would have to become un-justified. You would have to be declared unjust again. Then when you confessed, [you would have to be] justified all over again. In doing that, because it is a legal pronouncement by a perfect God, you would un-justify justification. It would make it futile. It would be calling God a liar. It would be impossible. It just can't happen.

Who redeems us with His precious blood and pays the ransom to set the prisoner free? Jesus. Yet if you could lose your salvation, you would be un-redeemed. Jesus would say, "Hey, this guy or gal, doesn't fit. I'm taking him back to the store." Let me put it this way. Let's say you go and buy [an] article of clothing, and it's got a snag, [or] it doesn't fit right, [or] it looks ugly. Have you ever had an article of clothing take itself back to the store without you? It's like [the garment saying], "Hey, man, if you don't want me, I don't want you. I'm going back and getting your money back for me." It doesn't work. The owner has to take it back. Who owns you? Jesus, who bought you with His precious blood. He says He loses none, He rejects none, He takes none back. It just can't be done. It's an impossibility.

Who adopts us as sons so that we have all the rights and privileges of Jesus Christ Himself? God does. Yet, if you could lose your salvation, you would have to be un-adopted [by God] and re-adopted by Satan. Then you [would] confess [your sins], [and God would say], "Oh, I'll take him back." Then you [would] sin, [and He would say to Satan], "You can have him back." Then you [would] confess, [and God would say], "I'll take him back." [There would be] a lot of paperwork. Once you are adopted by God, you will forever be His child, and nothing in the world could ever change that because God doesn't un-adopt anyone.

Who sanctifies us positionally in Christ? We talked about two different kinds [of sanctification]—progressive sanctification, [which is] your growth in Jesus, [and] positional sanctification, [which is] when you place your faith in Jesus and God sees you through the blood of Christ so that you are now perfect in Jesus. If you became unsaved, you'd have to become imperfect outside of Jesus. You would have to become un-sanctified.

You would have to undo the work of God. You would have to do the impossible because it's God who places you in Christ, and no one—we just read it from John 10—can take you out of that place. Jesus and the Father aren't doing it, and who's going to overpower them? They're greater than all, and they're one in the matter.

How are we able to become perfect before God? What is it that allows you to stand before God blameless with great joy? It's the blood of Christ. It's the atonement of Christ. It's His death on the cross, His shed blood to make perfect atonement for sin. If you could sin a sin that caused you to lose your salvation, then what would that tell you about the sacrifice of Christ? [That it is] insufficient. It doesn't cover sins. It doesn't work. You [would] have struck a blow at the very heart of Christianity, and denied the sufficiency and perfection of Christ's atonement, saying [that] they are not sufficient for all sins, but just for some sins. If you take the view that any sin causes you to be unsaved, then what you say is [that] Christ's atonement deals with no sin. You can see why Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism is condemned as a heresy because it is salvation by the works of man and denies the very core of Christianity itself: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

What about the free gift of eternal life that you receive when you're saved? Who would ever give that back, and who would you give it back to? If you had eternal life given to you and you rejected that, you would then have temporary eternal life. It's not like a woman's hairdo when she gets a permanent, which is really a "temporary." This is eternal life forever, never-ending, on into the future, forever and ever. The same word[s] used of hell being forever are used of heaven being forever, so if you have received eternal life and it's only temporary, then heaven is only temporary, hell is only temporary and you've undone all three doctrines. Of course, [that] just can't be. It's an impossibility. [If] you deny eternal security, you deny God, you deny God's Word, you deny God's sovereignty, you call Him a liar, you set yourself up on the throne, [and] you demote God. Though you may give lip service to God's grace, you believe in salvation by works and works

alone when you try to add works to salvation. We have learned, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that if [salvation is] of works, it's not of grace, and that if you add works to grace, you nullify grace, which leaves only you and your works trying to help God save you.

Arthur B. Whiting said in a two-part journal article found in *Biblio Theca Sacara*, [from] Dallas Theological Seminary in 1944, these words:

From this Biblical presentation of such a far-reaching doctrine, it is manifest that a denial of [eternal security] is attended by appalling consequences. To deny eternal security is to set aside the sovereignty of God.

According to the Scriptures, "he does according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What have you done?" (Daniel 4:35). Such absolute and universal sovereignty means that His counsels cannot be defeated, His purposes cannot be thwarted, His will cannot be resisted.

It is certain that He has purposed unconditional security for His own, but to say the believer's safekeeping depends upon his behavior is virtually to wrest the scepter of sovereignty from the hands of God and place it in the hands of man.

To deny eternal security is to deny the eternal efficacy of the cross. It is said that the Christian may lose his salvation through sin, but if there is a single sin which has the power to unsave the believer and cause his eternal rejection, it is clear that Christ's blood is an inadequate provision for sin. . .

. . . To deny eternal security is to ignore the perfect and permanent work of the Spirit. His impartation of eternal life, His making the believer one with Christ, His sealing with a view to a future redemption, His indwelling forever—all of these gracious ministries are rendered of no account if the believer can

be lost. And to deny eternal security is to turn a deaf ear to the clear teachings of a well-defined and large body of Scripture statements.¹

Amen for Arthur Whiting! As we've seen, men, in their desperation, their desire to take part in their own salvation—"I want to seek God. I want to believe. I want to have my say. I want to have a choice. I want to do this"—actually secure their own damnation because they're really saying, "God's grace needs me, needs me to be saved, and needs me to keep saved." When you put "me" in grace, grace goes away and you're the only thing left.

I hope that this series has been an encouragement to you who are believers so that you can see from a very large overview of the doctrines related to salvation that God is sovereign, He is in control, and He's not going to lose you. You can praise Him and thank Him, and you can do what Jesus said the disciples should have done [in Luke 10:20], and rejoice that your name is recorded in heaven and no one is going to wipe [it] out.

If you do not know Christ, what are you waiting for? Today is always the day of salvation [see 2 Corinthians 6:2]. Jesus already paid the price. He lived that perfect life, He died on the cross for your sins, He was buried, and rose again on the third day. He commands you to repent and believe. He will save you, He will transform you, He will keep you until the end. What excuse are you going to give to Him? "Well, I loved my sins more than You. I would prefer to have sin for a short time so I could have hell for eternity." That's what you're going to be asking for, and that's what you're going to get. Jesus loves you and lays down His life for you, and He says, "As many as receive Me, to them I give the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on My name" [see John 1:12]. Don't delay. Do it, because the promise is true. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for great truths from Your Word. What an encouragement it is to see that Your Word is so crystal clear about our eternal

¹Arthur B. Whiting, *Sacra Volume 101* (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1944; 2002), 101:171

security in Christ. Oh, Father, may we never be tempted to put ourselves in with Your grace, to think that we had something to do with seeking You first instead of responding to Your seeking us, to think that we could overrule Your sovereign decree, or to think that we could keep ourselves saved by our own works apart from Your grace, or by adding our works to Your grace. Father, may we acknowledge that You are sovereign, You are Lord, and You save sinners, and we merely need to receive the free gift of eternal life, and You do all the rest. Father, we praise You for that. Help us to share that message with those who don't know it. If there's anybody here who doesn't know Jesus as his or her Savior, right now, in his or her heart, may he or she cry out to You, repent of his or her sins, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ, for we know Your Word says [that] if we confess Him as Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we will be saved [see Romans 10:9]. May that happen today in many hearts, we pray in Christ's name, Amen.

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