

Chad Hester

## SESSION 6 | Faithful to the End – Perseverance of the Saints

*“God did not begin the work in any man’s soul without due deliberation and counsel; from all eternity he knew the circumstances in which that man would be placed, and He foresaw the hardness of the human heart, and the fickleness of human love. If then He deemed it wise to begin, how can it be supposed that He shall change and amend His resolve? There can be no conceivable reason with God for leaving off such a work – the same motive which dictated the commencement must still be in operation, and He is the same God, therefore there must be the same result, namely, His continuing to do what He has done.”* –Charles H. Spurgeon

*“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, 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.”*  
–John 10:27-30

### I. Common Misunderstandings

- A. Perseverance does not mean that Christians will never fall into sin just because they are Christians.
  - “Perseverance does not mean that Christians will not fall, only that they will not fall away.”<sup>1</sup>
- B. Perseverance does not mean that those who merely profess Christ without possessing faith or actually being born again are secure.<sup>2</sup>
- C. Perseverance does not mean that Christians are exempted from all spiritual danger or earthly loss and have “their best lives now” simply because they have been saved and sealed.

### II. Four Common Views

- A. *Loss-of-salvation view*: the Bible’s warnings make it clear that born-again believers can, by forsaking Christ, fail to persevere in faithfulness/longsuffering, and lose the inheritance of salvation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, p. 156.

<sup>2</sup>Matthew 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven...”

<sup>3</sup>Classic Arminian position; held by John Wesley, I. Howard Marshall, Scott McKnight

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- B. *Loss-of-rewards view*: acknowledge that the Bible's warnings make it clear that believers are threatened with a possible loss but that loss concerns rewards only, not salvation or eternal life, which come through faith alone.<sup>4</sup>
- C. *Test-of-genuineness view*: the Bible poses many warnings because of hypocrisy and are addressed to people who profess faith but prove to be disingenuous in their confession.<sup>5</sup>
- D. *Means-of-salvation view*: the Biblical warnings and admonitions are directed to believers and function as a means of ensuring perseverance by calling for faith that endures to receive the prize.<sup>6</sup>

### III. Teaching from Scripture

- A. Psalm 34:7 – *“encamps around those who fear Him”*
- B. Jeremiah 31:3 – *“loved you with an everlasting love”*
- C. John 5:24 – *“whoever...believes me has eternal life”*
- D. John 6:51 – *“if anyone eats of this bread [Jesus], he will live forever”*
- E. Romans 11:29 – *“for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable”*
- F. 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 14 – *“we are afflicted...but not crushed...knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also”*
- G. Hebrews 10:14 – *“by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified”*
- H. 1 Peter 1:3-5 – *“caused us to be born again...to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading...by God's power are being guarded”*
- I. 1 John 5:11-13 – *“whoever has the Son has life...that you may know that you have eternal life”*
- J. **\*Philippians 1:6** – *“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”*
- K. **\*John 10:27-30** – *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, 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.”*
- L. **\*Romans 8:35-39** – *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?...For I am sure...anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”*
- M. **\*1 Peter 5:10** – *“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you...will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you”*

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<sup>4</sup>Very common in Evangelicalism; Grace Evangelical Society, Charles Ryrie, Charles Stanley, Zane Hodges

<sup>5</sup>Wayne Grudem, John MacArthur

<sup>6</sup>Louis Berkhof, Thom Schreiner

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#### IV. Two Things We Know from Scripture

- A. Perseverance is **Certain**<sup>7</sup>
- B. Perseverance is **Necessary**<sup>8</sup>

#### V. The “Problem Passages”

- A. Ezekiel 18:24; Matthew 13:20-21; 2 Peter 2:20-21
- B. Hebrews 6:4-6: *“For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.”*
- C. Hebrews 10:26: *“For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins”*

#### VI. Interconnectivity with Reformed Theology

- A. *The Purpose of God*: He has freely chosen [unconditional election] to set his love upon [irresistible grace] sinful people [total depravity] from eternity past to be specifically redeemed [limited atonement] by the atoning work of Christ, adopted and brought into an eternal inheritance [perseverance].
- B. *The Power of God*: His purposes are always accomplished.
  - Two reasons why a purpose would be changed:
    1. Inability to foresee obstacles that may hinder the execution of said plan
    2. A lack of power needed to overcome any obstacles.
  - Neither applies to God!
- C. In justification he gives a new legal status that cannot be taken away.
- D. In adoption He grants a place in His family and an inheritance in which we will not be disowned.
- E. Christ’s death and resurrection releases us from both the penalty of sin and the reigning power of sin; assuring our perseverance.

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<sup>7</sup>John 6:37; 39-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1; 28-39; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 3:3; 5:18

<sup>8</sup>Matt. 7:21-23; 10:22; 13:18-23; Luke 8:4-8; John 8:31-32; 15:4-6; 1 Cor. 15:1-2; Colossians 1:22-23

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- F. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee/down-payment which makes perseverance certain.
- He gives us a new nature in regeneration resulting in a persevering delight in faith and holiness (1 John 3:9).
  - He gives new longings to be conformed to Christ (Romans 8:23-29).
  - He seals us, ensuring our safe arrival into final salvation (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13).

## VII. Reformed Theology for Real Life

### A. A Steadying Peace

- In the midst of our trials, our losses, and our spiritual warfare we have a God who has promised to set his affections on us for both our current pains/struggles and for all of eternity as we dwell with him in his presence.

### B. A Sober Caution

- The warnings and admonishments in Scripture are given in God's mercy to be a means of grace whereby we examine ourselves, fight to kill sin, and persevere in faith and holiness.

### C. A Heartfelt Plea

- Given the erroneous comfort that many people have concerning a "once-saved-always-saved" perspective of a sinner's prayer; we must be bold to hold the Biblical view of *persevering unto the end* in our love of Christ and growth in godliness.
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