

THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

LESSON #11

Memory Verse: Hebrews 12:1-2 (NKJV)

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Bible teaches that a Christian can never lose his salvation. Since God is “*the author and finisher of our faith*” (Hebrews 12:2), salvation is secure. God is faithful to cause His children to persevere to the end. Those who “fall away” from faith prove that they were falsely converted and never truly belonged to God, because God protects and keeps those who believe.

I. The Security of Salvation

Salvation is the work of God from beginning to end. He purposes salvation, enacts salvation, and secures salvation. There is no one who will be justified who will not also be glorified.

A. Christians are secure in their salvation, because they are called according to the purpose of God. Read Romans 8:28-30 and answer the following questions.

1. God works together _____ things for good for a Christian (v.28).
2. Believers are called according to the purpose of _____ (v.28).
3. What is the purpose of God’s calling and predestination (v.29)? _____

4. What are the five “links” to the “golden chain of redemption” given by Paul in verses 29-30? _____
5. Which two “links” precede calling, justification, and glorification? _____

6. In light of this, why do you think God inspired Paul to use the past tense? _____

7. What is the significance of the fact that everyone who is justified will also be glorified (v.30)? _____

B. Christians are secure in their salvation, because, by definition, the gift of eternal life is eternal.

1. Is there any possibility for one who possesses eternal life to ever be condemned (John 5:24)? _____

2. Is there any possibility for one who possesses eternal life to ever perish (John 3:16)?

You can't have eternal life that's not eternal.¹

II. The Power and Faithfulness of God

The power and faithfulness of God is the ultimate reason why any believer is secure in his salvation. God purposes to save each and every believer, and God is always faithful to His own purpose. He accomplishes this by causing them to persevere in faith.

A. Christians are kept and protected by God the Father.

1. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, how will God prepare the believer for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? _____

2. Why will the believer be blameless on the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:9-10)? _____

3. What is God's promise in Philippians 1:6 to those who have been saved? _____

4. According to John 10:27-30, why is it impossible for the believer to fall away from faith? _____

¹ John MacArthur, "The Perseverance of the Saints, Part 1," <http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermons/90-270> (August 29, 2004).

B. Christians are kept and protected by Jesus Christ.

1. What is the will of God that Jesus promised to do in John 6:37-40? _____

2. Did Jesus keep His promise while on earth (John 17:9-12)? _____
3. Does Jesus still keep His promise (Hebrews 7:25)? _____

C. Christians are kept and protected by the Holy Spirit.

1. How does the Spirit contribute to the perseverance of the Christian (Romans 8:26-27)? _____

D. Read Ephesians 1:4-13 and answer the following questions.

1. Who chooses believers for salvation (v.4)? _____
2. Who redeems believers to salvation (v.7)? _____
3. Who seals believers and guarantees their inheritance (vv.13-14)? _____

They who God hath accepted in His beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end and be eternally saved.

The Westminster Confession of Faith

III. The Perseverance of the Believer

Although it is God who works in the believer to persevere, the believer willfully obeys and takes responsibility for his perseverance.

A. True believers will persevere in faith and never reject God.

1. What did Paul say must be true regarding the faith of a person who professes Christ in order to be truly saved (1 Corinthians 15:1-2)? _____

2. In Colossians 1:21-23, how did Paul characterize those who have been reconciled?

3. How does a believer live (2 Timothy 2:11)? _____

4. How long must a believer be faithful to be saved (Mark 13:13; Hebrews 3:14)? _____

5. Read Philippians 2:12-13. What is the Christian's responsibility? _____

6. How did Paul describe his own perseverance (2 Timothy 4:7-8)? _____

B. All believers persevere only because God moves them to persevere.

1. What promise did God make to Israel in Jeremiah 32:40? _____

2. How did God plan to accomplish this promise (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Hebrews 8:10)? _____

3. Re-read Philippians 2:12-13. Why can the believer be confident as he works out his salvation with fear and trembling? _____

4. In Ephesians 2:8-10, what did Paul say that God did in eternity past in order to ensure that believers persevere? _____

5. For what reason did Jude specifically praise God in Jude 1:24-25? _____

This doctrine does not mean that Christians will not fail (i.e. perseverance does not mean perfection); it means that they will not fail completely and finally. Believers have the ability to backslide and grieve the Spirit. This doctrine also does not mean that those who "accept Christ" can live however they want with no fear of hell. This is why "eternal security" is not as good of a designation as "perseverance of the saints".

IV. The Non-Perseverance of the Unbeliever

Unbelievers sometimes claim to be Christians but do not persevere in their faith. In fact, they cannot persevere. It is important to understand that the Bible consistently equates lack of perseverance to faithlessness and unbelief. This unbelief is evidenced by ungodly living.

A. Unbelief is evidence that one never belonged to Christ. In John 10:26, Jesus told the unbelieving Jews that they did not _____ *because* they were not His sheep.

B. What did Jesus say about the relationship of perseverance to salvation in John 8:31?

C. Why did John say that a believer cannot sin his way out of salvation (1 John 3:6, 9-10)?

D. Read the parable of the sower and its explanation (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23) and answer the following questions.

1. How much fruit was produced by the seed that fell on the path (vv.4, 19), rocky places (vv.5-6, 20-21), and thorns (v.7, 22)? _____

2. How long did the three types of hearers listed above persevere? _____

3. How did Jesus respond to the faith of the teacher of the law (Matthew 8:19-20) and the disciple (Matthew 8:21-22)? Which types of soil do these men represent? _____

E. What reason did John give in 1 John 2:19 to explain why people had defected from the faith? _____

F. Read Matthew 7:21-23 and answer the following questions.

1. What is the destiny of all ungodly people who are not living a life of holy perseverance (see also 1 Corinthians 6:9-10)? _____

2. The people described in this passage are churchgoers who were involved in ministry. On the basis of Jesus words, how can we know that they were definitely never saved (v.23)? _____

V. Personal Application

A. Do you believe that your salvation is secure in Christ? If so, how has this truth impacted your life? _____

B. How does knowing that God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is faithful to fulfill His purpose give you confidence regarding your salvation? _____

C. How have you partnered with God in the sanctification process? How have you grown spiritually as a result? What evidences of genuine salvation do you see in your life?
