

February 18, 2007  
Shepherd's Community Church  
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Selected Scriptures

“Perseverance of the Saints” (or “Eternal Security of the Believer”)

Review: Perseverance of the Saints

Walter Elwell (Tyndale Bible Dictionary) says in reference to the perseverance of the saints: *“This persistent patience is called for in prayer (Lk 18:1–8; Col 4:2); in well doing (Rom 2:7; Gal 6:9); in Christian teaching (Acts 2:42; 2 Tm 3:14); in affliction (2 Thess 1:4); in grace (Acts 13:43; 2 Cor 6:1); in faith (Acts 14:22; Col 1:23); in divine love (Jn 15:9; Jude 1:21); in standing firm (1 Cor 16:13; 2 Thess 2:15); in abiding in Christ (Jn 15:4–10; 1 Jn 2:28); in running with patience (Heb 6:12; 12:1); in not falling away (Heb 3:12; 4:1–10); and in being zealous to confirm our call and election (2 Pt 1:10).*

*Yet Scripture never implies that perseverance depends entirely upon human effort... ”<sup>1</sup>*

[See also John 4:13-14; 5:24; 6:51; 10:28; 17:24; Rom. 8:28-30, 37-39; 1 Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; Jude 24; Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 2:24-26]

Walter Elwell goes on to say: *“The failure in perseverance of Judas (Jn 6:71), Demas (2 Tm 4:10), and Hymenaeus (2 Tim 2:17) must be kept in mind, as well as the dread possibility of neglecting so great a salvation (Heb 2:3), being disqualified (1 Cor 9:27), falling while we think we stand (1 Cor 10:12), and committing apostasy (Heb 6:1–8). For, as Jesus said, ‘He who endures to the end will be saved’ (Mt 10:22; 24:13). Such extraordinary emphasis cannot be accidental. The pressures of pagan society, the danger of persecution, emotional reaction after a wonderful initial experience, and the apparent implication of “instant salvation,” made it imperative for Christians to understand that by their endurance they would inherit eternal salvation (Lk 21:19; Rom 5:3; Col 1:11).”*

[See also Mt. 7:22-24 & 1 John 2:19 for those who thought they were genuinely saved or appeared to be genuinely saved for a time but really were not.]

NOTE: The following information is from a class syllabus on Theology taught by Dr. Henry Holloman of Talbot Theological Seminary. Used by permission.

## I. Definitions:

### Definitions

1. The eternal security of the believer means that through the infinite and unfailing work of God the believer's salvation is secured forever (Ps. 37:28; Jn. 10:27-29).

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is a corollary of eternal security, although its emphasis is somewhat different as is evident from the following definition:

2. The perseverance of the saints means that through the inward working of God's power each believer will continue in saving faith forever (Phil. 1:6; 1 Jn. 2:19; Lk. 22:31-32).

## II. Primary Evidence:

A. Rom. 8:28-30; 11:29 cf. Job 23:13; Is. 14:24 – the unchangeable purpose of God for the believer.

1. According to Rom. 8:30, all whom God predestinates, calls and justifies will be ultimately glorified with no believers becoming lost in the process.

2. A similar idea is expressed in Rom. 8:29 where it is taught that those who are foreknown are also predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ.

3. 1 Cor. 1:8-9; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:18 – The Scriptures also emphasize God's faithfulness to His promise concerning each believer.

4. If a true believer could become lost, then God would be unfaithful, while Christ would have failed to do His Father's will (Jn. 6:39).

5. Believers are given by the Father to Christ (Jn. 6:37, 39; 17:6, 9, 12), and it is unthinkable that believers should be lost.

6. Rom. 8:30 (“He ... glorified,” Greek, edoxasen, aorist indicative) – God’s purpose for the believer is so certain to be accomplished in the future that it is spoken of as if it were already past.

B. Ps. 37:28; Jn. 10:27-29; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; Jude 1 – the infinite preserving power of God.

C. Rom. 8:35, 38-39 cf. Jn. 13:1 – the infinite and unalterable love of God. In Rom. 8:39, Paul precludes any possible thing from separating the believer from the love fond of Christ.

D. 1 Jn. 2:1-2 cf. Rev. 12:10-11 – the unfailing advocacy of Christ. Is there any sin of the believer from which the blood of Christ cannot cleanse the believer? Of course not!

E. The eternal intercession of Christ.

1. Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25 – His priesthood.

2. Jn. 17:11-12; 11:42 cf. Lk. 22:31-32 – His prayers.

F. Jn. 1:13; 3:3, 5, 7-8; Tit. 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:17 – the irreversible character of Divine regeneration.

1. Divine regeneration (the spiritual birth) can no more be reversed than physical birth.

2. Jesus Christ did not say, “You must be born again, again, again...” (Jn. 3:7).

3. Since “salvation is from the Lord” (Jonah 2:9), it should be remembered that “everything that God does will remain forever” (Eccl. 3:14).

G. 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 27; Eph. 5:30 – the organic unity and indissolubility of the body of Christ.

1. 1 Cor. 12:12-13 – the believer is made a member of the body of Christ by baptism of the Holy Spirit, and evidence infers that the work of the Holy Spirit is permanent.

2. Therefore, it is unthinkable that Christ would ever sever a member of His body (1 Cor. 12:27) or that a believer could be disjoined from the body of Christ once he has been joined by the Holy Spirit.

H. The permanent ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

1. Jn. 14:16-17 CF. 1 Cor. 6:19 – Christ’s promise of the internal and eternal dwelling of the Spirit in believers. If the believer could lose his salvation, then, of course, there would be the possibility of an unbeliever experiencing the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

2. Eph. 4:30 cf. Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 1:22 – Sealing of the believer by the Holy Spirit “unto the day of redemption.” The Holy Spirit is Himself the seal. In the symbolism of Scripture a seal signifies: (1) A finished transaction (Jer. 32:9-10; Jn.; 17:4; 19:30); (2) Ownership (Jer. 32:11-12; 2 Tim. 2:19); and (3) Security (Est. 8:8; Dan. 6:17; Eph. 4:30). This seal cannot be broken because of the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit and because God could not promise the believer that he is sealed “unto the day of redemption” if that seal could be broken.

3. Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 5:5 – the earnest of the Spirit is given to the believer.

a. The earnest involves God’s pledge and assurance to the believer that He will complete the transaction.

b. If salvation could be lost, then God would have failed to complete the transaction which He promised to the believer.

I. The Nature of Eternal Life.

1. Jn. 5:24; 1 Jn. 5:13 – The believer’s assurance of the present possession of eternal life appears incongruent with the idea that this eternal, spiritual life given from God lasts only until you lose it.

2. Jn. 10:28, “...and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish...” -- Furthermore, the idea of possessing eternal life precludes being lost or perishing.

J. Heb. 10:14 – “For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.” – The eternally perfect standing of the believer before God. This affirmation reinforces the idea

that the believer possesses an eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9; 9:12) rather than the believer being on probation with his salvation constantly being in jeopardy.

K. Jn. 5:24; Rom. 8:1, 33-34 – the eternal exemption of the believer from condemnation.

1. Jn. 5:24 – Also, the believer “has passed out of death into life” which means that this exemption is eternal since permanency is indicated by the Greek perfect tense.

2. 1 Cor. 11:31-32 – One of the reasons why God disciplines believers for unconfessed sins is because He has promised that “we will not be condemned along with the world.” In 1 Cor. 11:31-32, forms of the Greek verb krino (ekrinometha, v. 31; krinomenoi, v. 32) are used twice in regard to “temporal punishments” divinely applied to Christians who do not confess their sins. The earthly, temporary discipline which God exercises upon Christians is in contrast to the eternal punishment reserved for the world and expressed in 1 Cor. 11:32b by the intensive form katakrino (“to condemn”). If a Christian could become lost, then as a result he would also experience eternal condemnation or wrath which would in turn contradict God’s promises.

3. Rom. 8:33-34 – Also, for God to bring condemnation upon one who has truly believed in Christ would contradict justification.

4. Such passages as 1 Cor. 3:11-15 reveal that the believer’s works may be condemned so that he suffers loss of reward (1 Cor. 3:15a cf. v. 14).

5. However, the believer doesn’t lose his salvation (1 Cor. 3:15b) because that is based upon the work of Christ and not upon the works of the believer (1 Cor. 3:11).

L. Jn. 6:44, 65 cf. Heb. 11:6. See also Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 12:9 and Mk. 9:24; Lk. 17:5; 22:31-32 – The faith of the believer ultimately originates from God. It would seem unlikely that the believer’s saving faith would be lost since it came from God.

### III. Objections.

A. It gives a license to sin. The argument is usually put like this: “if you are saved and cannot lose your salvation, then why not live in sin?”

1. Neither the grace of God (Rom. 6:1-2) nor the security of salvation gives the believer divine permission to sin (1 Jn. 1:9; 2:1).

2. If a person has the idea that eternal security gives him justification for sinning, then he probably is not saved since a saved person will not make a practice of sinning. See 1 Jn. 3:9.

3. 1 Cor. 11:31-32 and see examples in Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 11:27-32, esp. v. 30; 1 Jn. 5:16-17 – Even if a person is a genuine Christian and tries to live in sin because he cannot lose his salvation, then God will discipline the sinning Christian even to the point of death to bring him back into fellowship.

B. It destroys motivation for Christian living and service.

1. In answer to this objection, it should be observed that the Bible appeals to the Christian to live for Christ and to serve Him, not to gain or to keep salvation, but because salvation is an assured possession.

2. It may be difficult to concentrate on Christian service if we are continually worried about whether or not we have salvation or might lose it.

CONCLUSION: Phil. 2:12-13

### Discussion Questions:

1. Review your notes in Hebrews until this point. Why is an understanding of the “Perseverance of the Saints” (or the “Eternal Security of the Believer”) critical to proper interpretation of the Book of Hebrews? What passages are coming up in Hebrews that have caused some people to doubt this doctrine?
2. How does perseverance impact our sense of “assurance of salvation”?
3. What is the difference in emphasis in the definitions of “Eternal Security” and “Perseverance of the Saints” given in the notes?
4. In what way(s) is our eternal security connected to the very nature (attributes) of God?
5. Read Romans 6. In Romans 1-5 Paul describes salvation as being an amazing gift of God’s grace. In Romans 6, how does he answer the objection that people might abuse that grace through a lifestyle of sin? In this chapter, what has God provided for us to live holy lives and what is our part in the process?
6. Read Titus 2:11-15. What does God’s grace actually do for us in relation to living a holy life? Does it motivate or de-motivate us? How does it do this?
7. If a person was constantly afraid of losing their salvation, what might that do to them in the following areas:
  - a. Pride
  - b. Fear/Anxiety
  - c. Legalism
  - d. Re-defining sin

<sup>1</sup>Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.