

The Living of Perseverance

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – the importance of living under the knowledge that God perseveres his own through life
2. aim – to cause us to persevere in faith, hope, and love under the power of God's preservation
3. passage – 2 Timothy 4:18

b. outline

1. Perseverance in a Continuing Faith
2. Perseverance in a Regenerative Heart
3. Perseverance in a Pattern of Growth

c. opening

1. the **assumptions** of perseverance (**as seen so far**)

"those who are elect, regenerated by the Spirit, and trust in Christ by faith will persist in their saved condition all the way through life *in spite of* the various moral failures they will fall under *and* will demonstrate their saved condition by the *increase* of repentance and faith over time"

 - a. perseverance is the doctrine that God has purposed, as a part of his decree of redemption, not only to draw his elect into salvation, but to *hold them fast in faith* through all of life
 - b. perseverance is a *biblical doctrine*, both explicitly by way of direct statements of Christ and his apostles, but also implicitly as a natural outworking of other biblical concepts (**e.g.** election)
 - c. perseverance is the opposite, in every way, of *apostasy*, because it assumes that only those who are truly born-again by the Spirit of God will continue until the end, all others holding false professions inevitably falling away
2. the **assuring nature** of perseverance
 - a. **question:** how can I know that I am truly saved – what proof is there that God is *preserving* me to the day of glory, especially as I see *conflicting* evidence in my own life which tends to produce doubt in my heart and mind?
 - b. perseverance is an *assurance*, by which the born-again actively produce, by the power of the Spirit, visible **evidences** of their saved condition
 1. God's *preserving* of his elect implies that they are not passively "floating along" on his graces, but are *actively* being moved, by his Spirit, to the goal of an *entire* glorification
 2. this active work of the Spirit produces genuine *assurances* to the believer of his saved condition
 - c. a continuing faith, a hatred of sin, and an increase in the fruit of the Spirit

I. Perseverance in a Continuing Faith

Content

a. actively continuing to trust in Christ

1. **common mistake #1:** believing that "faith" is simply a *one-time profession* of belief in Christ
 - a. the "once saved ..." approach to salvation – a singular act that produces a permanent condition
 - b. **note:** this is *not* to say that faith doesn't "start" somewhere – it certainly does, for the unregenerate man has no *inherent* ability to trust in God – therefore, God must give us faith (**Eph. 2:8-9**)
 - c. **principle: faith is not a one-time act – faith is a continuing trust, in an active sense, of what God has promised to do through Jesus Christ**
 1. thus, faith *continues* as a trust in the promises of God throughout life
 2. **e.g.** the (popular) "need" for a life-altering moment in the past as the "evidence" of salvation
 - a. **rather:** are you trusting in Christ *now* – do believe the Scriptures *now*?
2. **common mistake #2:** believing that "faith" is simply a *passive* approach to living
 - a. the idea that having saving faith requires no "additional" action to be real (**i.e.** no Lordship)
 - b. **e.g.** it is not just "belief" – **i.e.** I "believe" my car can get me home, but faith is to actually get in the car and trust it (literally) to get me all the way home (James 2:14-26)

"So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."
3. perseverance = a *continuing* trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ that permeates *every aspect* of the life of the truly born-again person (**i.e.** every thought, word and deed)
 - a. the regenerate person *perseveres* in that trust – he or she will never stop trusting in the completed work of Christ – the apostate *never did* because he or she does not *inherently* trust God

4. **principle: the presence of faith, the desire to believe that Christ is the only way into relationship with God, a desire that permeates one's life, is a great assurance of the perseverance of the saints (Hebrews 3:12-14)**

"Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end."

II. Perseverance in a Regenerative Heart

Content

a. actively hating sin

1. **contention:** the hatred of sin in the heart is *strong* evidence of having been born again
 - a. regeneration = the supernatural work of the Spirit of God whereby he changes the underlying nature of a person from one that is hostile to God to one that loves the Lord
 - b. known as being "born again," "a new creature," having a "heart of flesh," etc.
 - c. according to the promise (**Ezekiel 11, 36**), a heart that is no longer hardened to the things of God (**i.e.** as stone), but a heart that obeys God and seeks to follow his statutes and rules (**i.e.** as flesh)
 - d. obviously, such a supernatural change is 1) permanent, 2) characterized by the desire to do God's will in all things and 3) a hatred of what God hates
2. **example:** Paul's assessment of his life in **Romans 7** – a desire to do what was he knew was right, even as he struggled to do it, and often failed
 - a. it is that *inward desire* that is the **evidence** of genuine conversion
3. perseverance = a *continuing* hatred of sin that permeates the heart of the truly born-again person and comes out in a desire to flee from temptation and run after holiness (above all else)
 - a. the regenerate person *perseveres* in that hatred – he or she will never stop hating sin – the apostate *never did* because he or she is *inherently* sinful
4. **principle: the presence of a hatred of sin, the desire to be holy and obey the Lord, is a great assurance of the perseverance of the saints (Colossians 1:21-23a)**

"And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard ..."

III. Perseverance in a Pattern of Growth

Content

a. actively growing in the fruit of the Spirit

1. a sense of genuine faith and a desire to flee from sin should lead towards **spiritual maturity**
 - a. maturity = knowledge and experience moving further and further away from an *elementary* view of Christianity towards a stronger understanding of doctrine and practice (**Hebrews 5:12-14**)

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil."

 1. **note:** this passage comes immediately before a warning of apostasy in chapter 6
 2. a deeper understanding of Scripture, doctrine, theology, apologetics, etc.
 3. a deeper understanding of living out the various aspects of the regenerate heart
2. a maturity that sees us growing in the various aspects of living as regenerate (**2 Peter 1:5-10**)

"For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall."

 - a. it is the regenerate heart that has a desire to grow in knowledge (of Scripture and of Christ)
 - b. it is the regenerate heart that has a desire to be self-controlled (in both sin and other desires)
 - c. it is the regenerate heart that has a steadfastness of character (in following through)
 - d. it is the regenerate heart that has a godliness (in being outwardly and inwardly consistent)
 - e. it is the regenerate heart that has a brotherly affection (in looking out for the welfare of others)
 - f. it is the regenerate heart that has a love (in putting others above oneself)
 - g. these are the "fruit" of the Spirit – the *results* of a truly born-again heart in everyday life

3. perseverance = a ever-increasing *maturity* that characterizes the life of the truly born-again person, and shows itself in a myriad of Christ-like ways
 - a. the regenerate person *perseveres* in doing good – he or she looks for opportunities to love God and others – the apostate *never will* because he or she is *inherently* hateful
4. **principle: the presence of a spiritual maturity, an increasing desire to do good towards others, is a great assurance of the perseverance of the saints (1 Timothy 4:18)**
"The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."