

Communion Meditation 9/26/10 **Perseverance to the End**

Answer 36 of the WSC: The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace, and perseverance to the end.

The last of the five benefits is **perseverance to the end**. We've looked briefly at four other benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification – assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, and increase of grace.

In Jn. 10 Jesus said "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone 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 My Father's hand."

Phil 1.6 tells us that we can be confident that "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

We were dead in our trespasses and sins, but He who called us by His grace and regenerated us, then justified us and adopted us, is the one who can keep us to the end, by His grace and power.

Charles Spurgeon used the illustration of a ship in explaining that a true believer may fall, but not fall permanently. He said to imagine a ship, very large, where you couldn't fall overboard, but you can fall on the deck. By God's grace, a true believer cannot fall off the ship, cannot lose what God has given.

Psalms 37:24 "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand." You may fall sometimes, but not be "utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds" you with His hand.

Prov. 24:16 "...a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity."

1 Peter 1 we are "kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." We are kept by the power of God, not our own power.

I'm sure you can all think of illustrations of perseverance and endurance. We heard some of these at the Providential History festival, such as George Mueller, who prayed for 52 years for one of his friends to come to the Lord. And we heard about several martyrs. We heard about Eric Liddel. And I also thought of William Wilberforce in his efforts over many years to stop the slave trade in England.

But my first thought about perseverance was about runners. I remembered an Olympic runner in the 92 Barcelona Games who was running the 440 sprint. He was running well, and then about half way around he pulled his hamstring and fell down. He was in great pain, but stood up and started to hobble to the finish line. His father ran down from the stands and helped him. I'm not

sure if this runner was a child of the King and wanted to glorify Him, or just wanted to finish as a matter of pride. But what touched me was his father coming alongside. And our Heavenly Father helps us to reach the finish line. We couldn't have begun the race without His calling, can't run it now without His grace, as He supports us and "trains" us, and by His grace alone we will make it to the finish line.

We started the race of the Christian life because He justified us by faith in Jesus Christ, we are in the race now as His adopted children, and are being sanctified and "trained" as He continually coaches us and supports us as our Heavenly Father.

Heb 12:1-3 "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 set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross....

The runner who fell down reminded me of Eric Liddel. He also fell down but was able to get up and still win. One man was a winner and one lost the race, and sometimes in the race we look at those ahead of us and think, "Why can't I be where they are". Or we glance back and think, "If they were like me, they might be where I am".

Romans 14.4 "'Who are you to judge another's servant? To His own master he stands or falls. Indeed he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.'" God our Father is able to make his children stand, and to finish the race, some being "slower" some "faster", but standing at the finish line together with Our Savior.

The end is certain, but we still must run hard, in a disciplined way. Paul said, "Do you not know that in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it." Run with perseverance. He also said we must work out our salvation - not to earn it, but to keep hard at it, press on, train ourselves in godliness, and let God train us. The race is often not easy, but we are called to run in such a way that shows we are already victors, by God's grace, being diligent to make our calling and election sure.

Doxology of Jude: "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."

Father, thank you that we can persevere because of your work of grace in our hearts, and that You will complete the good work You began in us. Part of the strength to run the race is obedience to your commands, and we obey joyfully now the command to remember You and Your sacrifice as we participate in this communion meal. Keep us from laziness in the race, Help us to look to You, Lord Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.