

Last week, we began to consider the fifth of five doctrines commonly called The Doctrines of Grace. If you remember I suggested we can summarize this fifth point with two words: preservation (which places the focus on God's activity in preserving His people to the end), and perseveration (which places the focus on our activity in persevering to the end).

- I. Its Need
- II. Its Means
- III. Its Motives

I. Its Need

1. By the perseverance of the saints is meant—Every Christian must continue in the faith, against great opposition, to the very end.
2. Here I want to consider the three major parts that comprise this simple definition (proving them from Scripture).
3. (1) Every Christian must continue in the faith—that is, we must continue believing the truth of God's word.
4. Jn.8:31-32—"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'"
5. (a) Who Christ spoke to—"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him"—they gave a profession of faith (they claimed or professed to believe in Him).
6. (b) What Christ said—"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed"—to abide is to continue.
7. Abiding or continuing in Christ's word does not make you a disciple, but it reveals or manifests you're a disciple.
8. 1Cor.15:1-2—"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain."
9. Notice, they were to receive and hold fast the gospel—to hold fast means to continually embrace it.
10. Only those who hold fast the gospel are saved—holding fast the gospel proves who've received the gospel.
11. This is seen in the final phrase "unless you believed in vain"—that is, never truly or actually believed.
12. While Scripture teaches salvation by faith, it does not teach that every kind or profession of faith saves.
13. Historical faith, Jas.2:19—"you believe there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble."
14. Dead faith—"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can (that) faith save him?"
15. Temporary faith—"He who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while."
16. Saving faith—this is a faith that lays hold of Christ from the heart, bears fruit, and lasts (in various degrees) to the end.
17. Thus, it's only possible to "believe in vain" if you have one of these non-saving kinds of faith (historical, dead, and temporary).
18. But before I move on, let me pause for a second and answer an objection—If only true faith endures to the end, then how are we to know we have true faith, other than waiting to see if we endure to the end?

19. This is actually an objection raised against the doctrine of perseverance by those who believe once saved always saved.
20. Now, as I've said last week, we believe in once saved always saved, because to be saved is to be saved from sin (penalty, power, and presence).
21. For example, I listened to a sermon a few weeks ago by a man who was neither Arminian nor Calvinistic (he was what we might call 'broad evangelical).
22. And out of the five doctrines of grace (or Calvinism) he actually said, the perseverance of the saints was the most dangerous).
23. And here's why—because in teaching that Christians have to endure it robs them of having any present assurance.
24. But this is not true—for the same Scripture that exhorts us to endure, also exhorts us to examine our faith.
25. Thus, the question isn't so much "do I believe" but, what kind of faith do I have? Is non-saving or saving?
26. Col.1:21-23—"And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister."
27. (2) Every Christian must continue in the faith, against great opposition, Acts 14:22—"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God (Js.1:12)."
28. The Promised Land is on the other side of the wilderness, and if you or I am to enter it we must cross the desert.
29. Matt.24:11-13—"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved (10:21-22)."
30. Matthew 24-25 are called the Olivet Discourse because it recounts our Savior's teaching on the Mount of Olives.
31. Within the discourse our Savior uses the destruction of Jerusalem as a preview of the destruction of the world.
32. Thus, regardless if 24:11-13 has any application to the first, it ultimately and finally refers to the second.
33. In other words, our Savior is warning all Christians, they must endure through deception and lawlessness.
34. And this is at the very heart of the perseverance of the saints—Christians must endure through tribulation.
35. (3) Every Christian must continue in the faith, against great opposition, to the end, Matt.24:13—"He who endures to the end will be saved."
36. By "the end" is meant the end of the age (which happens when Christ returns) or the end of one's life.
37. Heb.3:14-15—"For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said, "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.""
38. Notice what the authors says, "we have become partakers of Christ" "if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end."
39. In other words—"holding our confidence steadfast to the end" is proof that we've become partakers of Christ.
40. We don't become partakers of Christ if we endure to the end—we endure to the end because we've become partakers of Christ.

41. But the phrase I'm after here is "to the end"—that is, to the end of our lives (regardless how long that is).
42. For some, the length of their endurance is very short (like the thief on the cross), for others, it's very long.
43. But either way, all Christians must hold out to the end—either Christ's return or death (whichever comes first).

II. Its Means

1. By "means" I refer to the way in which Christians are enabled to persevere through difficulty to the end.
2. In other words, Christians are not expected to endure to the end, without possessing the resources to endure.
3. Scripture nowhere exhorts Christians to endure to the end, in and of themselves; their own strength and ability.
4. Simply put—Christians endure by faith in Christ and His word, all in humble dependence upon His Spirit.
5. Heb.10:35-39—"Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 'For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.' But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul."
6. In many ways, this is the heart of the practical purpose of this letter—to encourage Christians to endure.
7. (a) The need for endurance (vv35-37 – 'you have need of endurance'); (b) The means for endurance (vv38-39 – 'the just shall live by faith').
8. This latter phrase (the just shall live by faith) is a quotation of Habakkuk 2:4 and is quoted 3 times in the NT (Rom.1:17; Gal.3:11).
9. In Romans and Galatians, Paul applies it to our justification, and here he applies it to our sanctification.
10. The Christian life begins and continues by faith—we become Christian by faith and we remain Christian by faith.
11. Jn.15:5-6—"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned."
12. I trust it goes without saying—this is a favorite text of the Arminians to oppose the truth of eternal security.
13. How do we understand this statement of our Savior? Well, simply put, we believe and embrace it at face value.
14. There are two people—those who abide in Christ or those who are burned—abide or burn are the two options.
15. Notice, those who abide in Christ "bears much fruit"—they not only persevere but bear fruit to God.
16. Those who do not abide fail to bear fruit. Why? Because they had what I've called a dead faith and not saving.
17. We abide in Christ by faith, and it's through faith we receive communion, comfort, and strength from Christ.
18. This is how we are enabled to "do all things" "bear much fruit" and "endure to the end"—by faith in Christ.

19. Rom.11:22—"Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off."
20. (1) Perseverance is the work and responsibility of the saints—every Christian must endure to the end.
21. I trust this point is rather obvious—all of the exhortations to endure are addressed to us as individuals.
22. We are not passive in conversion nor in sanctification—nobody repents, believes, or endures for us.
23. (2) Perseverance is dependent upon the work of God's Spirit—Christians persevere because God preserves.
24. Phil.2:12-13—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."
25. Notice how Paul brings together both sides—we work out what God works in—both man and God works.
26. But we must be careful to rightly relate these two points—we only work out what God first works in.
27. While man and God both work, they don't work in the same way—God's work goes before our work.
28. Both truths must be equally stressed, and neither at the expense of the other—we persevere because God endures.
29. Thus, it's not enough to simply say "God will keep us" nor is it enough to say "we must keep ourselves."
30. We must encourage Christians to cast themselves upon the keeping and preserving grace of God in Christ.
31. Ga.3:3—"Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh."
32. Having started your Christian life by the power of the Spirit, are you now trusting in your own strength.
33. Thus, while God has promised to preserve us to the end, we are responsible to trust Him for grace to endure to the end.
34. For example, in Acts 27, Paul was in a ship heading for Rome, when a severe storm threatened his life.
35. An angel appeared to him and assured him and the crew would be saved, v24—"fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you (276 people)."
36. The crew begins to panic and decide to abandon ship, a decision that would have resulted in their deaths.
37. V31—"Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, 'Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.'"
38. In other words, although God expressly told Paul, he and all the people would be saved, he warned them, if they failed to stay in the ship they would not be saved.
39. So too, God promises every Christian they will be eternally saved, and yet, they must abide in Christ to the end.
40. Put another way—God has decreed to preserve His people to the end by enabling them to endure to the end.

III. Its Motives

1. Here I want to quickly consider three primary motives to encourage Christians to endure (persevere) to the end.
2. Now, I've taken these three motives from the book of Hebrews, simply because of the nature of that book.
3. As I've said, because of the opposition, the Hebrews were being tempted to return to the Old Covenant.
4. Thus, the book is filled with several motivations for these Christian not to turnback, but endure to the end.
5. (1) Biblical warnings—there are many stern and strong warnings of what awaits those who turn back.
6. Heb.10:26-27—"For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries."
7. Before I go any further, let me clarify, such warnings as this, come to the entire professing people of God.
8. The professing church is made up of every baptized person who professes to be a believer in Jesus Christ.
9. They have two purposes; first, to produce legal fear in hypocrites; second, to produce gospel fear in Christians.
10. Legal fear refers to that kind of dread and terror that awakens a dead soul to the horrors of God's wrath.
11. Gospel fear refers to that Fatherly reverence and awe that drives us Him in loving and humble dependence.
12. Thus, warnings of apostasy are intended to create holy fear, self-distrust, and further dependence upon God.
13. For example, a parent may point to a busy street and say to their child, 'If you ever leave my side you will be runover and die.'
14. This is intended for their good—to cause them to stay close to their parent and never leave their side.
15. (2) Biblical promises—there are many sweet and encouraging promises for us to continue to the end.
16. Heb.10:35—"Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward" v36—"For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry."
17. Scripture not only warns us of judgment if we go back, but it woos us with promises if we endure (persevere).
18. This can be illustrated in our Savior's 7 letters to the church in Asia Minor, as they are laced with promises to overcome.
19. Rev.2:7—"To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."
20. Rev.2:11—"He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death" 2:17—"To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."
21. Rev.2:26—"And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations"
22. Rev.3:5—"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."
23. Rev.3:12—"He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. I will write on him My new name."

24. Rev.3:21—"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcome and sat down with My Father on His throne."
25. Rev.21:7—"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My Son."
26. (3) Biblical examples—there are many examples of saints to encourage and motivate us to endure to the end.
27. This is the whole point of Hebrews 11 (and what many people refer to as the Hall of Faith)—having just exhorted them to endure by faith, the author illustrates his point with chapter 11.
28. How did OT saints become Christian? By faith. How did OT saints endure opposition to the end? By faith.
29. Heb.12:1-2—"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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
30. (a) The example of OT saints, v1—"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."
31. (b) The example of our Savior, v2—"looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
32. This is the greatest example of perseverance—Christ endured to the end through great hardship and opposition.
33. If Christ endured shame for us, then surely, we can endure shame for Him—if He endured for us, then we can endure for Him.