

**“What it Means to be Reformed”; Session # 47 – “The Preservation of the Saints”,  
Prepared for the Adult Sunday School Class on August 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015,  
by Pastor Paul Rendall.**

**The Perseverance of the Saints is based upon the Preservation of the Saints by God Himself.**

**The definition of the Perseverance of the Saints:**

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is this: Those who have been effectually called, will most certainly persevere in faith and evangelical obedience to the end of their life.

The reason that the saints will persevere is because they stand in the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. They are effectually called by God and placed at the time of their conversion, under the umbrella of Christ’s imputed perfect righteousness, by which they are justified. (They are seen as perfectly righteous in the sight of God in an on-going sense all the way through their life.) Once a sinner believes in Christ, they then become one of His saints, and are continually supplied with Christ’s powerful imparted grace to strengthen and help them to put sin to death and to live to righteousness. God keeps giving them grace to strengthen and sustain their faith, even though many trials, temptations, and difficulties might come to them. In the process of their sanctification, they may even for a time, fall into grievous sins, but God will faithfully bring them back. Thus, the heart of a true Christian is upheld, strengthened, and given grace moment by moment to continue to follow Christ in the best of situations and the worst of situations. Because of the greatness of God’s grace and Christ’s Intercession, a true Christian will pray, they will repent, and they will continue to pursue righteousness; all because God is faithful to continue and complete the work that He has truly begun.

**1. The Doctrine of the saints persevering is based upon God’s preserving and keeping their souls.**

**a. There must be a work begun, in the effectual call and regeneration of the heart, in order for a Christian to persevere.**

Philippians 1: 3-6 – “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Paul could pray, thanking God upon every remembrance of these Philippian believers, because he had had real fellowship in the gospel with them from the first day; that is, the day of their receiving the gospel and being saved by God in connection with their faith in Jesus Christ. Having seen the genuine evident of their true and saving faith, he knew that he could be confident that they would persevere in their faith because God had begun the good work of regeneration, and he knew that God would carry that work on to its final completion; until the day when the Lord Jesus returns and all of His dear people are glorified.

**b. There also must be a work of God which continually upholds and preserves the faith of the true Christian all through their life.**

Psalm 121: 1-8 – “I will lift up my eyes to the mountains – from whence comes my help?” “My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” “He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber.” “Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.” “The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand.” “The sun will not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.” “The Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul.” “The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever.”

You can see here that the reason that the saint lifts up his eyes to the mountains is that they are a picture to him of the strength of God. God made the mountains, and spiritually He is the Rock of the believer’s faith. God who made the mountains and keeps them in place will keep the souls of His saints. He will not slumber nor sleep in His watch-care over their lives. He will be their keeper physically; watching over the nation of Israel in its wilderness wanderings, not allowing the sun to smite them by day because of the pillar of cloud, and guiding them by night by the pillar of fire; both physical realities of His care for them. He will protect His saints from all evil and keep their soul so that they will not be ultimately deceived or drawn away from their steadfastness of faith in Him. He will guard them in all of their goings out and comings in, from this time forth and forever. They will suffer no lasting harm or everlasting damage from the things which He ordains and permits in their lives.

**c. There is a special keeping of them from the evil one, even though they may fall into sin for a time.**

Luke 22: 24-34 – “Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called “benefactors”. But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves. But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren. But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death”. Then He said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.”

Now, it is interesting that right at the very time that these believing disciples needed to be the most humble and the most prayerful that they would holding a conversation over which one of them was the greatest. “Pride comes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Proverbs 16: 18) It was not only Peter who was going to deny the Lord that night. It was all of the disciples who were stumbled that night. In Matthew 26: 35 it says: “Peter said to Him, ‘Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny You.’” “All the disciples said the same thing too.” In the New American Standard translation verse 31 reads: “Then Jesus said to them, ‘You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I will strike down the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.’”

So also, we read in Mark 14: 27-31 – “Then Jesus said to them, ‘All of you will be made to stumble (σκανδαλισθησεσθε) (skandalisthesthe) (“You will all fall away” – NAS) because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’” But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee. Peter said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.” Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night,

before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” But he spoke more vehemently, “If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And they all said likewise.”

Notice how Jesus states that they would all stumble, be offended, fall away from him that night. But yet He anticipates not a falling away which would apostatize from Him in the final and ultimate sense, but only for a time. Because He says immediately after that: “But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.” Peter is very self-confident and does not understand that all of His spiritual strength and determination to follow the Lord and do what is right, is based upon the grace which is given to Him in Christ. He, as all disciples of Christ, have to learn this lesson the hard way.

Luke 22: 54-62 – “Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest’s house. But Peter followed at a distance. Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, “This man was also with Him”. But he denied Him, saying, “Woman, I do not know Him.” And after a little while another saw him and said, “You also are of them”. But Peter said, “Man, I am not”! Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, “Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean”. But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are saying!” Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times”. So Peter went out and wept bitterly.”

**d. There is a falling away which is permanent, but it is not a true Christian falling from saving grace; it is a temporary believer falling from common grace.**

Hebrews 6: 4-12 – “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.” “For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.” “But beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.” “For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

The word in the Greek which is translated “fall away” here, is a different word from the word which is translated “fall away” in Mark 14: 26. This word in Hebrews 6: 6 is παραπτο.

**Jonathan Edwards says this in his treatise on the Religious Affections:**

“And besides, it is to be considered, that persons may have those impressions on their minds, which may not be of their own producing, nor from an evil spirit, but from the Spirit of God, and yet not be from any saving, but a common influence of the Spirit of God: and the subjects of such impressions, may be of the number of those we read of, “That are once enlightened, and taste of the heavenly gift, and are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and taste the good Word of God,

and the power of the world to come” (Heb\_6:4; Heb\_6:5); and yet may be wholly unacquainted with those “better things that accompany salvation.” spoken of Heb\_6:9.

So that although natural men may be the subjects of many influences of the Spirit of God, as is evident by many Scriptures, as Num\_24:2; 1Sa\_10:10; 1Sa\_11:6; 1Sa\_16:14; 1Co\_13:1-3; Heb\_6:4-6 and many others; yet they are not in the sense of the Scripture, spiritual persons; either are any of those effects, common gifts, qualities or affections, that are from the influence of the Spirit of God upon them, called spiritual things.

## **2. The Doctrine of the Saints persevering in faith and obedience is meant to be understood in terms of evangelical obedience.**

**a. What is evangelical obedience?** Evangelical obedience is our striving toward that perfection which God expects of every Christian, even though He knows, and we should know, that our obedience will have imperfections attendant to it. It is based upon the grace which is imparted to us by Christ, through the Holy Spirit, after we believe in Him for salvation. This obedience of the believer is his sincerely going about to keep all of the moral commandments and ethical principles of the Word of God, not in order to merit favor with God, for that has been accomplished by Christ Himself, but to glorify God from a heart which is thankful for all that Christ has done for them.

Matthew 5: 43-48 – “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” “For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?” “Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” “And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others?” “Do not even the tax collectors do so?” “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

To be perfect in this case is to love like the heavenly Father loves evil people who do not acknowledge Him. His love truly is perfect. Inasmuch as we imitate the Father in our love for people who hate us and curse us and persecute us, by praying for them and doing good to them, we are becoming more and more like the Father.

**b. Two usages of the word “perfect”** - Philippians 3: 12 – “Not that I have already obtain it (the resurrection from the dead) or have become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 3: 15 – “Let us therefore, as many as are perfect (“mature” in the New King James), have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by the same standard to which have attained.”

Johann Bengel in his commentary says: “Τέλειος means often not absolutely perfect, but one having attained the full limit of stature, strength, etc., which constitute the man’s τέλος, opposed to νεοί or παῖδες, youths or children. See 1Co\_2:6. So Paul here, ver. 15, claims to be τέλειος, fully established in the things of God, no longer a babe in Christ. Yet in ver. 12 he denies that he is as yet τετελειωμένος (a race-course expression), i.e. crowned with the garland of victory, his course completed, and perfection absolutely reached.”

