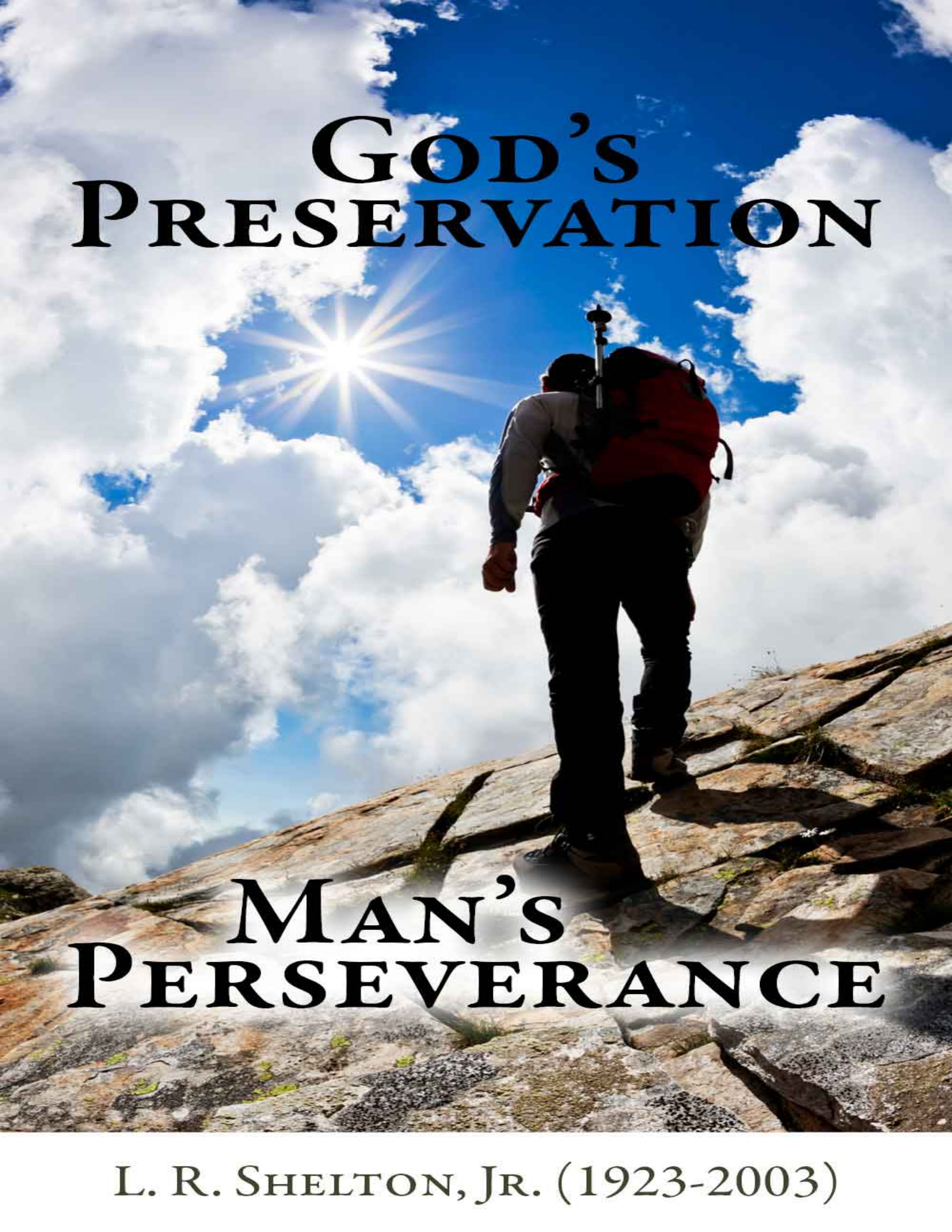




GOD'S PRESERVATION

MAN'S PERSEVERANCE

L. R. SHELTON, JR. (1923-2003)

God's Preservation and Man's Perseverance

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God's Preservation and Man's Perseverance

I. Viewed from Different Perspectives

It has been upon my heart for some time now to give a series of messages on the subject of the perseverance of the saints, or the eternal security of the believer, as set forth in the inerrant, unbroken, inspired Word of God. The Holy Spirit has directed my thoughts and understanding in bringing these messages at this time for the glorification of the Lord, the comfort and edification of His people (all of those who have been born again by the Spirit of God and washed in the blood of Christ by faith), and for the warning of those who would misuse this precious doctrine to cover up their heart of false profession.

The only reason I believe this gracious teaching of the perseverance of God's people is that this truth is taught in God's Word. To me the perseverance of all God's people to the end of life is a most precious and comforting truth, because it honors all of God's attributes—to name a few: His wisdom, His faithfulness, His goodness, His mercy, His patience, and His long-suffering—and it gives glory to His eternal salvation. It honors and glorifies the all sufficiency of the *grace* of God, which is given to us freely in the Lord Jesus Christ, because it assures the people of God a safe passage to heaven and glorification with Christ forever and ever.

Further, this gracious truth honors the work of Christ for His people. It puts an eternal value upon His precious shed blood, upon His eternal love in dying for us, upon all His suffering beneath our sins; and most of all it assures that His work was not in vain. My dear friend, this is precious to me, because it fulfills His precious promise made in John 6:39-40: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And

this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” Also this truth of the perseverance of the saints makes Isaiah 53:11 stand out in such an amazing way—listen! “He [Christ] shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” These words teach us that of all for whom Christ died He shall lose none, for His work was a satisfying work to the justice of God in payment for the sins of His people and the vindicating of the holy Law of God which we had broken, and under whose curse we abode.

This gracious truth also honors the work of the Holy Spirit in the children of God, for His work not only includes regeneration, effectual calling, and conversion, but it also includes sanctification and the bringing of those for whom Christ died to that blessed state of glorification with Christ forever and ever. Surely He takes the things of Christ and reveals them unto us, and this causes us to walk in that way of righteousness and true holiness unto the end.

Listen now! When we go into a subject like this, we must of necessity consider it from all sides and from different views, that we do not get a distorted view of it. You ask, “Why?” My friend, it is because this gracious truth of the eternal security of the believer, taken by itself as a teaching or doctrine, cannot be rightly understood until it is worked out in our lives in a *practical* way. The reason why this precious doctrine has been misunderstood is because many have taken it by itself without the practical outworking in their lives, using it as a cloak under which to hide the sins they continue to indulge, or as a soothing salve to their conscience as they try to justify the sins of the flesh, saying to themselves, “Once saved, always saved, so my sins are all taken care of.” No, my friend! This precious, comforting truth of the eternal security of the believer was *not* given to us so we could go on in sin, but to help us in our walk down here on earth, to give our faith a basis for a good hope through grace, and to encourage our hearts amid all the obstacles of the flesh, the world, and the devil that come against the people of God.

With all these thoughts in mind and by the grace of God, I will set before our hearts this precious truth of the eternal security of the believer from four views: two from God’s side, or God’s *preservation*, showing the reality and

blessedness of this doctrine of being preserved or being kept by God Himself; and two from man's side, or *man's perseverance*: his responsibility to continue on in the pathway of righteousness and true holiness, in spite of all difficulties and obstacles, showing how this gracious truth is worked out in the lives of God's children in a practical way. Then, last of all, as the Lord leads, I will answer from God's Word the objections which many make against this biblical doctrine of true security for the people of God. I ask of you to please hear *all* of the messages before you come to any conclusion, for there is much light from God's Word on this subject, both from God's sovereignty in preservation, and from man's responsibility in perseverance.

First, from God's view, we see that 1) the true Christian holds fast in perseverance to the end because he is held fast by the Lord; and 2) each teaching of God's Word underlines the truth of what we call "final perseverance."

Then from man's side, we see that 1) each believer must hold fast to the end because he is commanded to do so; and 2) he will hold fast to the end because of what has been worked in him by God the Holy Spirit, based upon the all-sufficiency of the grace of God as given us in the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us first consider *God's preservation*: The true Christian holds fast in perseverance to the end because he is held fast by the Lord. The Scriptures abound with this great truth. If it were not so, then there would be no assurance of our reaching heaven at last, because of the depravity of our hearts, the dangers along the way, the attacks of Satan, and the continuous allurements of this present evil world. Therefore, because of all this, our Lord has left us many great and precious promises for faith to lay hold of in every time of need, to encourage our hearts to go on. One such promise is found in 1 Peter 1:3-5: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Notice that the salvation that God gives to His people in Christ is an inheritance that is *incorruptible*,

that is, it cannot change. It is spoken of as being *undefiled*, for it will stand all the stain of sin. Also it is an inheritance that *will not fade away*; that is, it is not a mirage, because He Who gives it is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and He is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, Who Himself is our salvation.

But I believe the greatest comfort of all is that this is an inheritance that is reserved in heaven for me. You see, when God saves a precious soul by His grace and through the power of the Holy Spirit, He lets that sinner know that the work He has done is a work for eternity; and so sure it is that God will get His beloved, blood-bought child home, that he *reserves* a place in heaven for him! This is all of grace; and it gives an assurance that is precious to my soul. It lets me know that He Who planned, purposed, and worked out my salvation will not fail to get His children home at last. Let me illustrate what this great truth means to me: there is a chair at the great marriage supper of the Lamb that no one else can use, because it has been reserved for me by the Master of the supper Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a home in heaven that no one can live in but your speaker, because it has been reserved for me by the Lord Himself. There is a crown in heaven that no one else can wear but your speaker, because it has been given to me in Christ and reserved for me by God Himself. My friend, all of this is pure, undeserved grace. You see, your speaker by nature is nothing but a hell-worthy sinner, but I am now what I am because of God's grace. You might say, "Pastor, that is presumptuous pride, to speak like that!" No, my friend, this is what the Word of God speaks to me; this is what this great teaching of the eternal security of the believer means to me in Christ. He Himself has given me the faith to lay hold of this great truth in Him, and He lets me walk with Him in it day by day.

Now I hear someone else say, "But Pastor, if I believed that, then I would take my fill of sin and live as I please, because I can do nothing that will mar this inheritance!" But if you were a true child of God, you would never make that statement, for in the new birth or regeneration you are given a new, divine nature that loves holiness and righteousness, and a desire to please Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. You would understand from 1 John 3:9 that "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is

born of God.” In other words, you would know that a child of God does not make sin the practice and rule of his life anymore.

So we learn from this passage in 1 Peter 1:3-5 that 1) The true Christian does not keep himself, but is kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, which salvation God has given us freely in the Lord Jesus Christ. Under this same heading, another precious thought is: 2) God will never forsake His people, for His justice and His faithfulness forbid Him to do so. In Psalm 37:28 we read that “the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever.” Dear friend, how could our great God in His grace put it any stronger than this, that He loved His people who were sinners, so much that He sent judgment upon Christ for them? His justice demanded complete payment for all our sins against His broken Law, so in love He paid the full price for them by sending His only begotten Son to die in our place. Then, because His justice has been satisfied by the shedding of His precious blood, He will not forsake His saints, but will preserve them forever.

Again, we read in 2 Thessalonians 3:3 that “the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.” You see, because our sin-debt to the justice of God has been paid in full, in His faithfulness to His promise He keeps us from evil and establishes us in Christ Jesus. This same truth is also brought out in Jude 1:24: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” Dear friend, is not this comforting to your heart, that our God will keep us to the end?

One more thought before we must close today: 3) God will fulfill His purposes for His people, and nothing can hinder them. We read in Psalm 138:8, “The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever.” You see, Philippians 1:6 will explain this verse: “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Yes, God will perfect that which concerneth me, continuing to do His work of grace in my heart and in the hearts of His blood-bought children forever.

The most precious of the promises along this line is found in John 10:27, where we hear Christ speaking: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and *they shall*

never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Oh how precious is this great truth of the *preservation* of the saints, and their *perseverance* to the end, because of the love of God to our souls, and the love of Christ in providing so *great salvation* for those whom God the Father had given to Him in electing love!

"Great is Thy faithfulness," O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided -
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

– T. O. Chisholm

II. Kept and Held Fast by God

Dear friend, last week in presenting this blessed truth of *the perseverance of the saints* or *the eternal security of the believer* as it is set forth in God's Word, we felt led by the Holy Spirit to outline this to you by first viewing it from God's side which is preservation (being preserved by God), and then from man's side which is perseverance (a continuing on in the Christian walk in spite of all difficulties and obstacles); then lastly, as the Lord leads, to answer from God's Word the objections which many make against this Biblical doctrine of true security for the people of God.

Under *God's preservation*, we were considering first, that *the true Christian holds in perseverance to the end because he is held fast by the Lord*. The Word of God is filled with this precious truth. Jeremiah 32:40 sets this forth in these words—listen as God speaks to His people: “I will make an everlasting covenant with them [the people of God whom Christ bought with the price of His own precious blood], that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that *they shall not depart from me*.” My friend, did you hear these blessed words of comfort to the true people of God? God says in this everlasting covenant that He will not turn away from His people—He will never stop doing good to them—so they shall not depart from Him. And why will God never depart from His people, nor they from Him? Because He has made with them in Christ—not a temporal covenant—but an everlasting covenant of grace, ordered in all things and sure, a covenant that is ratified and sealed by the blood of Christ, the anointed, eternal Son of God (2Sa 23:5; Luk 22:20).

This promise corresponds to Ezekiel 36:26-27 where the Lord said, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” You see, dear friend, the true child of God holds fast in perseverance to the end, because he is held fast by the Lord Himself in this everlasting covenant of grace, by the work of the Holy Spirit in him to give him a new heart and a new spirit,

and the daily grace to follow on in the pathway of righteousness and true holiness to the end.

Another precious promise given to the true children of God to encourage their hearts in the truth that God will hold them fast to the end, is found in Psalm 94:14: “For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.” You see, the Scripture plainly says that God will not forsake His people; yet there are people who say that a child of God can lose his salvation, which is saying that God will cast off His people. But I would rather believe God than man, and rest in the unchanging God and His unchanging love for me in Christ, wouldn’t you? This verse in Psalm 94 corresponds to Hebrews 13:5-6 where again God affirms, “I will *never* leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

Now turn and look with me at Psalm 37:23, 24, 28, another portion that teaches that the true Christian holds fast in perseverance to the end because he is held fast by the Lord Himself: “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: *for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand...* For the LORD loveth judgment, and *forsaketh not* his saints; they are preserved for ever.” There are several thoughts here in these verses of Scripture which we want to set forth for our learning. These verses speak of the *security* of the people of God. They, being His chosen ones, cannot perish and go to hell, because their steps are ordered by Him. I say here is *preservation*, for God leads His people to be faithful to hold out to the end. Why? As Philippians 2:13 tells us, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” And He holds us by His almighty power, so we are “kept by the power of God” (1Pe 1:5).

Yet we read another thought in these verses of Psalm 37 before us: Look at the expression, “though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down.” Why did the Psalmist put this expression here? Because God’s people have fallen down through the centuries: Noah fell, Sampson fell, David fell; but there is a difference between falling and falling away. You see, God’s people may falter and fail and fall and flounder; but when they do, they are not utterly cast down *because sin is not the bent or rule of their life*. God will certainly bring them back in confession and repentance as He did David—read Psalm

51. He will renew them again even as He did Peter when Peter came back weeping bitterly over his sin in repentance. Yes, “the LORD upholdeth [them] with his hand...and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved forever”—not temporarily, not conditionally, but they are preserved forever by His amazing *grace*.

Now I ask, does this blessed truth of final perseverance by the people of God because of the powerful preservation of God, give the children of God a license to sin or to go on in a careless, prayerless way, without regard for the worship of the living God and His holiness? “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Rom 6:2). No way! Because Christ is now living His life in us by His Spirit, and our desires are after God and His ways. We may fall into acts of sin because we are still in these old bodies, but sin no longer is the bent and rule of the believer’s life, and we are no longer under its power and dominion.

Let us now move on into the New Testament, and look at a few passages of Scripture from among the many that declare to us this great and glorious truth of the final perseverance of the children of God because they are held fast by the Lord Himself in preservation. To me, some of the most gracious statements in the Word of God are found in John 10:27-29, where our Lord said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and *they shall never perish*, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” You see, the people of God persevere because they are preserved by God the Father and God the Son in that double hiding place where the people of God are placed when they become children of God by faith in Christ. These words correspond to Colossians 3:3, where we read concerning the children of God, “For ye are dead [because we died with Christ at the cross], and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

Notice what our Lord and Saviour said about His sheep, those for whom He died, here in John 10:27. He said, “My sheep hear my voice.” And why do they hear His voice? Because they have had their ears circumcised to hear the voice of the Son of God, so they are *alive* unto Him (John 5:25), and He unto them, because He knows them and calls them by name (John 10:3). Also, a stranger’s voice they will not follow, but will flee from him

(Joh 10:5), so they are listening and hearing the Shepherd's voice from His Word. Then they do the next thing spoken of in verse 27 of John 10: Our Lord said, "They follow Me." Yes, they are also circumcised in their feet to follow Christ wherever He leads.

Then in John 10:28, our Lord adds that He gives unto His sheep eternal life, and because of this gift of *eternal* life "they shall never perish." My friend, try as you will, you cannot make these words mean any thing other than that "they shall never perish," for the gift God has given them is eternal life in Himself; and this means that because He lives, His people shall live also with Him wherever He is, and that forever (Joh 14:3, 19). Also in John 10:28 He states that His people are *safe in His hand*, and no man is able to pluck them out of His hand. And in verse 29 He gives greater assurance of the security of His people by saying they are also in His Father's hand, for His Father gave them to Him, and no man is able to pluck them out of the Father's hand. Now how can the great eternal fact of the final perseverance of the children of God be stated any more strongly than this—that they are kept by the *power* of God (1Pe 1:5), because they are in Christ, hid with Christ in God, and nothing or no one can touch them? For how can you take any one away from the Omnipotent God, the all-powerful God, Who sits upon the throne of the universe?

So again we see that the Scriptures abound with proof of the final perseverance of the children of God because they are kept and held by the preservation of God unto the end, even as Jude expresses in verses 24 and 25: "Unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." There are many, many more such Scriptures which bring out this truth, but one more will suffice for this time. Listen to Romans 8:33-39: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things *we are more*

than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, *shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Dear friend, if we had no other passage in the Bible, I believe that this passage would teach us the impossibility of any child of God falling away. It shows how *impossible* [it is] for one who has been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit, who has repented with true heartfelt repentance toward God the Father, and has cast himself upon Christ (Who is God the Son) by faith in all that He is and has done for him in His substitutionary work at the cross. For such a one to fall away and be separated from the love of God in Christ and perish forever, it is *impossible!* Also this passage teaches that it is impossible for the devil to ever get one of God’s children. So all of this proves the truth of the final perseverance of the children of God, because they are preserved by God Himself in that inseparable union of love.

For your private study, here are some of the many other Scriptures which show this great truth of the eternal perseverance of the children of God: Matthew 24:24; John 5:24; 6:37, 39, 51; 14:19; 17:11; Romans 6:14; 8:30; 9:23; 11:29; 1 Corinthians 1:8; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:9, 23, 24; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:19; 4:18; Hebrews 6:17, 18; 10:14; and Jude 1:24. And again, as I requested in our first message, please wait until you have heard *all* these messages before you judge what is said about this gracious doctrine, for thus far we have only seen the doctrine from God’s side, which is God’s *preservation*. We will soon be considering another set of Scriptures concerning the *responsibility of man* in keeping himself in the love of God and walking in the way of righteousness and true holiness. Dear children of God, rejoice in the knowledge that you can hold fast in perseverance to the end because you are held fast by the Lord Himself.

From whence this fear and unbelief?
Hast thou, O Father, put to grief
Thy spotless Son for me?
And will the righteous Judge of men
Condemn me for that debt of sin
Which, Lord, was charged on Thee?
Complete atonement Thou hast made,
And to the utmost farthing paid

Whate'er Thy people owed;
How then can wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Thy righteousness,
And sprinkled with Thy blood?

If Thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my room endured
The whole of wrath divine,
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.

Turn, then, my soul, unto thy rest;
The merits of thy great High Priest
Speak peace and liberty;
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee.

– Augustus Toplady

III. Confirmed in Each Teaching of God's Word

We have been considering the blessed doctrine set forth in God's Word of the *perseverance of the saints*, or the *eternal security of the believer*, looking first at God's side of this truth. We have given you many Scriptures which plainly declare that the true Christian holds fast in perseverance to the end because he is held fast by the Lord. We see this especially brought out from John 10:27-29: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

You see, dear friend, in Christ's covenant with His Father, He promised to become the surety of His people, and therefore gave His life for them that they might be cleansed from all their sins and spend eternity with Him in glory. He promised that He would get them all home at last, as we see in these Scriptures: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out...And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (Joh 6:37, 39-40). Surely we see from these verses that the will of our Heavenly Father was for Christ to keep (preserve) all whom He had given to Him to be their surety, redeemer, deliverer, Lord, and Saviour, until that last day; and none would be cast out.

This leads us now into our second thought on this view from God's side concerning the eternal security of the believer: *each teaching of God's Word underlines the truth of what we call "final perseverance."* We find that perseverance belongs to God's children because it follows from 1) *our election in Christ*. Ephesians 1:4-6 tells us, "According as he hath *chosen us in him before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the

adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” My friend, how could God lose those whom He had given to Christ before the world began? I say, He can’t, or 2 Timothy 1:9 is false, and God cannot lie—listen to God’s Word: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began.*” No, having elected all of His blood-bought children in eternity, He will not let us perish, because His faithfulness stands as our assurance. He is faithful to His Word, which says that He is able to keep us from falling (Jude 1:24).

Next, the truth of final perseverance of the saints follows from 2) *the covenant by which God the Father gave His people to His Son as the reward of His obedience and sufferings.* To me, this is a blessed argument for this great doctrine, for we are *given* to God the Son by God the Father as a reward for His obedience and sufferings. Jeremiah 32:40 confirms this covenant: “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” Here we have *scriptural proof* as to why God’s people do not turn from Him and apostatize. Why? Because He puts His fear in our hearts when He saves us so we shall not depart from Him! Also, He gives us His divine nature (2Pe 1:4) that loves holiness and true righteousness, and by the power of His Spirit within (because of this divine nature), we hold fast unto the end.

Also, the truth of this doctrine, the final perseverance of the saints, follows from the gracious truth that 3) *Christ prays for His own that they will keep on their way.* This is brought out in Peter’s case in Luke 22:31-32 where our Lord says, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: *but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.*” Then in Hebrews 7:25 we read that Christ is “able also to save them *to the uttermost* that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” My dear friend, this God can be trusted to hold us to the end, because He not only loved us enough to die for us, but to pray and intercede for us all the days of our lives, that we may hold on the true course to heaven. His prayer of John 17:24 shall not go unanswered.

Listen to how He prays for His people which were given to Him of the Father and for whom He laid down His life: “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” My friend, only when Christ’s prayers for His people go unanswered will I ever believe that one for whom He died shall ultimately be lost.

Next, I would say that this truth of final perseverance of the saints follows from 4) *the once-for-all nature of Christ’s atoning death*. Hebrews 10:14 reads, “For *by one offering* he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,” and verse 10 tells us that “we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*.” These words could mean nothing else than that God’s people, those whom He has given to Christ, have been sanctified by the death and resurrection of Christ once for all, and God has perfected them forever. In other words, when God saves His people, He looks at them as being forever perfected in the Lord Jesus Christ, because He has accepted the once-for-all sacrifice of His blessed Son as full payment for our sins; and in Him we are counted as holy, righteous, and perfect. This to me, dear friend, is one of the most blessed truths of the good news of the Gospel. This does not mean that we are perfected in this body right now. But it does mean that we have set to our seal in heaven a perfect righteousness and holiness which has been given to us in Christ; and because of this once-for-all sacrifice, we shall be with Christ wherever He is *for eternity*. And later I will show you from God’s Word that the evidences of this blessed hope will be worked out in the life and walk of every one of God’s born-again children, for he who has this hope purifies himself, even as Christ is pure (1Jo 3:3).

Another teaching of God’s Word which underlines this truth of final perseverance of the saints is, 5) *the union of each believer with Christ*. Romans 8:1 reads, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” And Galatians 2:20 reads, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” You see, the whole of the New Testament speaks of this union of each believer

with Christ, so how could He lose a member of His body? For “we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph 5:30), so we could never be lost or He would be in eternity with a mutilated body. Ephesians 5:23 tells us that Christ is the believer’s Husband, so if He lost any of us, He would be a husband without a wife, and that cannot be.

Next, I would say that the truth of final perseverance of the saints follows from the fact that 6) *the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian, the true child of God, forever*. Listen to John 14:16: “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, *that he may abide with you forever*.” So if a child of God would be lost, then the Holy Spirit would be lost with him! And this same truth is brought out in Ephesians 4:30: “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are *sealed* unto the day of redemption”; or, as Ephesians 1:13-14 tells us, “...Ye were **sealed** with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” My friend, these to me are precious Scriptures and precious promises to God’s children, that they are sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the end, to that day of complete redemption when we shall have our new bodies. So the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believing child of God assures his safe arrival home at last in heaven.

Then the truth of final perseverance of the saints follows from 7) *the affection that Christ holds for His people*. Read the 17th chapter of John carefully, and notice how our Lord in His High-Priestly prayer prays for those whom the Father had given to Him. Seven times He calls to the Father’s attention that He had a people whom the Father had given to Him, and He loved them. In verse 2, He said, “That he [the Son] should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” In verse 6, He said to the Father, “I have manifested thy name unto *the men which thou gavest me* out of the world.” In verse 9 He said again, “I pray not for the world, *but for them which thou hast given me*; for they are thine.” Then listen to those tender words of verse eleven as He prays effectually for his people: “Holy Father, keep through thine own name *those whom thou hast given me*, that they may be one, as we are.” But the one that sets them all off is His plea in verse 24. Listen as our blessed Mediator pleads with His Father for all of those who are in Him: “Father, I will that *they also, whom thou hast given*

me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” Oh what love pours forth here, as our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ asks His Father for all of His people to be with Him to share His glory! Now dear friend, if we believe anything, we must believe that the Father hears and answers the prayer of our great High Priest. So to me this is proof positive that all of those blood-bought sinners who have put their trust in Christ shall be with Him in eternity, and there shall not be one of them lost, for Christ’s prayer *shall be answered*, and Christ prays for His own.

But I would say that of all the Scriptures in the Word of God which set forth this precious truth of the eternal security of the believer, none is greater than the portion found in Romans 8:31-39. Listen once more to these words! “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors **through him that loved us**. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” There you have it! All is of God’s grace, given to us freely in the Lord Jesus Christ—a salvation from God’s side that ensures us a safe voyage to heaven; and *nothing* is able to detour, distort, or bring to naught God’s plans for His people. Based upon these Scriptures, I would say we would have to believe in the eternal security of the believer. And my friend, all of this is blessed to my heart and sweet music to the ears of my soul, that Christ is able to keep me from falling and to present me faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

Oh, that the Holy Spirit would be pleased to work this *so great salvation*
in each and every soul that is listening today is my prayer!

Where God begins His gracious work,
That work He will complete,
For round the objects of His love,
All power and mercy meet.

Each object of His love is sure
To reach the heavenly goal;
For neither sin nor Satan can
Destroy the blood-washed soul.

The precious blood of God's dear Son
Shall ne'er be shed in vain;
The soul on Christ believing, must
With Christ for ever reign.

– Albert Midlane, 1862

IV. The Nature of Man's Responsibility:

Part 1

Today we continue our series of messages on the subject *eternal security: God's preservation and man's perseverance*. We have been led of the Holy Spirit to first consider this blessed truth from God's side, which is *preservation*, and have shown you from the Scriptures that 1) The true Christian holds fast in perseverance to the end because he is held fast by the Lord; and 2) that each teaching of God's Word underlines the truth of what we call "final perseverance." Further confirmation of this truth is found in Romans 8:30, that "whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified"; You see, the words "called," "justified," and "glorified" are in the past tense, indicating that in the mind of God, all whom He elected in eternity in Christ and for whom Christ died, should be called, justified, and glorified, without the failure of one getting home to heaven!

Now in these next messages, by the grace of God the Holy Spirit working in us to help us rightly divide the Word of truth, I desire to set before your hearts this great truth of the final perseverance of the saints as seen from man's side, which is a continuing on in the Christian walk, in spite of all the difficulties and obstacles that come in the way of each believer. Would you listen, and ask God to give you spiritual ears with which to hear?

Running parallel in the Scriptures are two great truths, namely, the *sovereignty of God* and the *responsibility of man*. These truths are not opposed to each other, but are parallel, for they are both found in God's Word. You see, *God in His sovereignty has made man a responsible creature*, and the whole of Scripture sets this great truth forth. I would say right here that the man who has a firm grasp and understanding of these two truths—the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man—has a place to put every Scripture in God's Word. He neither goes to fatalism on one hand, nor antinomianism on the other, but holds to the *balance of truth* and is enabled by the grace of God the Holy Spirit working in him, to rightly divide the Word of truth (the Holy Scriptures, God's Word).

Therefore, since God deals with us as responsible creatures, He sets before us in His Word *His will* and *purposes*, and commands us to walk in His way of righteousness and true holiness (Eph 4:24). And this brings us to the first of the two points that we desire to set before you concerning *man's perseverance*: 1) *each believer must hold fast to the end because he is commanded to do so by the Word of God*. Let us look at Scripture. In Matthew 10:22 and 24:13 we read, "...he that endureth to the end shall be saved" and "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Now watch how this truth is buttressed by other Scriptures which deal with the believer's holding out to the end in a life of holiness, which proves that he is indeed a child of God. In Luke 21:19 we read, "In your patience possess ye your souls." What our Lord is saying here is that by your steadfastness and patient endurance you shall win the true life of your souls, which is eternal life. As Romans 2:6-7 tells us, God "will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." Also, Revelation 2:7 says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." And in John 8:31 our Lord told those who believed on Him, "*If ye continue in my word*, then are ye my disciples indeed." So by these verses, we are sure that the Scriptures command the children of God to endure to the end.

Dear friend, we cannot ignore these plain Scriptures, as our living God appeals to our responsibility to hold fast to the end—to endure to the end, and to continue to the end; otherwise, Romans 2:8-9 will apply to us: "Unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, *upon every soul of man that doeth evil*, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile."

Again, we see God's appeal to our responsibility to persevere to the end, set forth in Hebrews 3:6 where we read that we are Christ's house, His building, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." And in Hebrews 3:14: "For we are made partakers of Christ, *if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end*." Yes, we as Christians, the children of God, share in all that Christ promises so long as we steadily maintain to the end the trust with which we began our first experience of faith.

Watch how our hearts are admonished to persevere in Hebrews 6:11-12: “And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Here again we see man’s side, that he is not to be slothful, but diligent, and to follow the example of the Old Testament saints. How? “Through *faith* and *patience*” he will “inherit the promises.” So you see, we are commanded by the Word of God to persevere to the end, which is a great sign of our being preserved by the grace of God as the Holy Spirit works in us.

If you will look at verses 13-15 of Hebrews 6, you will see this great truth which we are discussing exemplified in the life of Abraham: “For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had *patiently endured*, *he obtained the promise*.” We see then, that Abraham believed God, and by faith he held fast to the end. He patiently endured all difficulties, because his eye was set upon the living God and His Word. He counted Him faithful Who had promised.

Then if we would read further in this same chapter, we will see why Abraham persevered. For in verses 16-20 we have the underlying truth of God’s preservation which we have previously been studying: “For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.” There we have it all summed up for us. We are to patiently, by faith, endure to the end, so we may obtain the promises. Yet on the other hand, by faith we know that our unchanging God holds us and keeps us by His almighty power, and that to the end of our life.

Now we should set before our hearts *the nature of this perseverance* in which we are commanded to walk. I know that we are not left in doubt as to what the Scriptures teach concerning perseverance, for Ephesians 2:10

clearly tells us that “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, *which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*” You see, good works are the opposite of evil works, and evil works are sin. So we learn this truth: God does not give us a license to sin when He gives us this precious teaching of the eternal security of the believer, but He equips us with the power and grace so we might be careful to maintain good works (Ti 3:8) and so please our gracious Lord. Thus, we see first the essence of this perseverance is *perseverance in holiness*. You ask, “Why is this necessary?” Dear friend, to me this is one of the chief marks of our salvation: a walk in righteousness and true holiness. Ephesians 1:4 and Romans 8:29 tell us that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, *to be like him in holiness*, and 1 Thessalonians 4:7 tells us that “God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” Over and over again, we are admonished to be holy. Listen to 1 Peter 1:14-16: “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” Yes, because God is holy, we are called to a walk of holiness; and only those who are walking in holiness have the right to assure their souls of eternal security. What does Hebrews 12:14 teach us? That without following Christ in holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

Now this sets at naught the accusation of those who claim that this Biblical doctrine of the eternal security of the believer leads man into sin. But even though there are those who claim that “once saved, always saved, and therefore it makes no difference how we live,” the Bible does not teach this, and the life of the child of God disproves that statement. How do we know this? Because since the Scripture calls us to a walk of holiness, every blood-bought child of God desires to please Him Who has called him out of darkness into his marvelous light, and seeks to walk in this way of holiness (1Pe 2:9). So let me emphasize it. Only those who are walking in the pathway of righteousness and true holiness have the right to assure their souls of eternal security, for God has not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness (1Th 4:7).

Our next consideration is that 2) *we are to persevere in the knowledge of God*. This was the apostle’s prayer for us in Colossians 1:9-10: “For this

cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and *increasing* in the knowledge of God.” And 2 Peter 3:18 tells us the same thing: “*Grow* in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” And how do we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord? By persevering in the study of God’s Word that we may know more of the God of the Bible, His relationship to man through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the operation and power of His Holy Spirit in us. But the question is, Are we persevering in the study of God’s Word? Not, have we studied it in the past, but are we studying it now? I am amazed at all the Bible study groups that have been formed in the past years, and this is good; but will each member of these groups persevere in their study? Will they continue to desire the sincere milk of the Word for five, ten, or fifteen years from now? Or will they run back again to the beggarly things of the world after the newness has worn off? Can we say that Hebrews 10:39 applies to us—“But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul”?

Next we see that the nature of this perseverance is 3) that *faith is to be firm on the Christian foundation, never to be dislodged from the hope offered in the gospel*. This is set forth in Colossians 1:21-23 in these words: “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature.” We are to stand firm upon the foundation of the virgin birth of Christ, which says that He was the God-man—God manifested in the flesh; that He was sinless, and in that sinless body He bore our sins on the cross. We must stand firm upon the necessity of the new birth, the total depravity of man, the necessity of the imputed righteousness of Christ for one to go to heaven; upon the substitutionary death of Christ, His shed blood and His bodily resurrection as our *only* standing before God; upon the great truth of justification before God by faith and faith alone in the blood

of Christ; and upon the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in every phase of our salvation, including sanctification, the making us in the image of Christ in holiness.

You see, it is persevering in the practical things set before us in the Word of God which assures us that God is working in us “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13).

I trust that by these Scriptures considered today, you have understood that you and I are responsible creatures, and that we must hold on our way in the teaching of God’s Word in order to have this gracious assurance that we are indeed children of God and thereby preserved by God for Himself.

V. Nature of Man's Responsibility: Part 2

We desire to continue our series of messages today on the subject of *eternal security: God's preservation and man's perseverance*. My friend, this subject of eternal security for the believing children of God is a most precious truth, and one that is taught in the passages of Holy Scripture we have studied in previous messages. On God's side of this blessed truth, we have seen that 1) the true Christian holds fast in perseverance to the end because he is held fast by the Lord; and 2) each teaching of God's Word underlines the truth of what we call "final perseverance." In our last message we began to open up to you man's side of this truth in the Scriptures which teach the responsibility of the believing child of God to hold fast in perseverance because he is commanded to do so by the Word of God.

In considering *the nature of this perseverance*, we saw that we are to persevere in the practical things set before us in the Word of God, such as holiness, in the knowledge of God, and in the faith that stands firm upon the foundation truths of God's Word, never to be dislodged from the hope offered in the gospel.

Now today we desire to continue this theme of the nature of this perseverance in which we are commanded to walk. We read in Revelation 14:12 these words: "Here is the patience [perseverance] of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." My friend, in this verse of Scripture we find that the child of God, the Christian, is to persevere in keeping the commandments of God, or keeping the Word of God and the faith of Jesus; or as Jude 1:20 tells us, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." You see, we are to give heed to the precious instruction of the Word of God, making that precious Word of God a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path (Psa 119:105), "holding forth the word of life" (Phi 2:16); for "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2Ti 3:16-17).

With these Scriptures in mind, we now proceed to the fourth consideration which shows the nature of this perseverance in which we are commanded to walk to the end of our sojourn down here: *we are to hold fast in loyalty to Christ, perseverance in Christ, in His Word and in faith.* Listen to Hebrews 3:6 and 14! “But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, *if we hold fast* the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope *firm unto the end...* For we are made partakers of Christ, *if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.*” My dear friend, I trust you see how clearly the Scriptures bring out the nature of this perseverance. It is a holding fast to that faith that caused us to cast ourselves upon Christ the first time as poor, lost, helpless, guilty sinners, to receive a new heart and new spirit, and to become partakers of the divine nature of God. It is a holding fast in Christ and to Christ in persevering faith steadfast to the end of our earthly journey. It is the loyalty to Christ as our Lord and Saviour, as our divine Head, as our Prophet, Priest, and King, steadfast to the end.

Then the fifth consideration which describes the nature of this perseverance to the end is: *perseverance in obedience to Christ.* Dear friend, obedience to Christ in walking in the pathway of righteousness is one of the truest marks of the children of God. I ask you, How can we be the children of God if we are not willing to obey Him, to submit to His will, His Word, and His leading by the Holy Spirit? If we have indeed changed masters and kingdoms, obedience is the rule of the kingdom of Christ—obedience to our new Master, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. You see, this obedience is a *willing obedience*, not a slavish one; it is “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:5). It is the obedience described in Romans 6:17: that of the will, the affections and the understanding. Listen! “But ye have obeyed [that is, the will] from the heart [that is, the affections] that form of doctrine which was delivered you” [and that is the mind, the understanding]. Yes, my friend, obedience to Him Who has become our Lord and Master is a characteristic of the true child of God.

Again, this perseverance is that “obedience to the faith” (Rom 1:5); the “obedience unto righteousness” (Rom 6:16); the obedience to the truth (1Pe 1:22); and 1 Peter 1:14-16 tells us, “as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because

it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” Oh my friend, I wish I could say I had perfect obedience at all times, but I must confess daily that I do not; yet it is the desire of the believer’s heart to follow Christ in this obedience all the days of his life. We must confess that it is only by the persevering grace of God that we continue on in perseverance, and so daily we cry to God for it. You see, we must go outside of ourselves to obtain the help needed to go on in the Christian walk and life, in spite of all difficulties and obstacles. But though the Word of God teaches that the believing children of God will persevere in a certain way, this truth of their eternal security does not give them a license to sin or live as they please and still say they are saved.

Now the sixth description of the nature of this perseverance to the end is *perseverance in fruitfulness*. This is certainly another mark of the persevering children of God, and one which our blessed Lord taught His disciples the night before His crucifixion. His words in John 15:1-8 are so clear they cannot be misunderstood, that if we are in Him, we shall bear fruit unto holiness and the end shall be everlasting life (Rom 6:22). So if we are not bearing fruit, then we shall be cut off, for we were never in Him. Listen to the words of our Lord: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples*” (Joh 15:1-8).

As we have seen from Romans 6:22, this fruit that we bear is “unto holiness,” and holiness is to be devoted to God, to be in His service; for Ephesians 2:10 tells us, “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” This fruitfulness, or this walk in good works, is described in

Ephesians 4:1-3 in these words: “Walk...with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” And in 5:1-2: “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.” In 5:8-10 [we read]: “But now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.” And in 5:15-16: “See then that ye walk circumspectly [watchful, carefully], not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

Then in Galatians 5:22-23 we find the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit, Who makes us fruitful, and enables us to bear fruit unto God: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”; and where these fruits are present, then we are indeed progressing in holiness more and more, and following in the pathway of our Lord.

Now before leaving this point, I must quote to you the apostle’s prayer for the people of God, which deals with this matter of good works and fruitfulness in perseverance. Listen to Colossians 1:9-10: “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” And I say, dear friend, my prayer to God is that He will work these things in us by His Spirit, and that our fruit will be unto holiness.

Then the seventh consideration that describes the nature of this perseverance to the end for the believing people of God is *perseverance in looking every day, every hour, and every moment to the Lord Jesus Christ*. To me, no words of admonition from the Word of God are greater needed than these words to the people of God who are instructed to walk by faith. My friend, I need them, and every child of God needs them, for we cannot live without this if we are to persevere. We shall persevere to the end only as we have Christ set before us as the Object of our faith. Listen to Hebrews

12:1-2: “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.*”

My friend, these words in Colossians 2:6-7 confirm and reinforce this. Listen: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” Now how does one begin the Christian life? By looking away from self unto the Lord Jesus alone by faith. Then how does this one who started by faith in Christ alone for the salvation of his soul continue day by day? The answer is the same. He looks away from self unto the Lord Jesus alone by faith. You see, having begun in faith by receiving Christ, by believing Christ, by coming to Christ, and by looking to Christ by faith, so we are to walk in Him the rest of the days of our life. Listen to me again. It is as we continue to look by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone as He is lifted up in the pages of Holy Writ that we will persevere to the end.

Oh, my dear friend, listen as we try by the Holy Spirit working in us to write this truth upon your mind. Only by “looking unto Jesus” crucified, to find in His blood our ransom, our pardon, and our peace, will we persevere to the end. Only by “looking unto Jesus” risen again for our righteousness, justification, and assurance will we persevere to the end. Only by “looking unto Jesus” glorified as our representative before God, to find in Him our heavenly advocate appearing in the presence of God for us, will we persevere to the end. Only by “looking unto Jesus” for strength in our weakness, for wisdom in our stupidity, and for hope in our hopelessness, will we persevere to the end. Only by “looking unto Jesus” to hold us, keep us, guide us, instruct us, and to teach us all the days of our life, will we persevere to the end. No, my dear friend, it is not by looking to ourselves, our thoughts, our desires, or our purposes that will cause us to persevere to the end. It is not by looking to the world, its lusts or its joys, nor to Satan and his rage or flattery; but it is as we look unto Jesus by faith. It is not by looking to our sins, our failures, or successes, our prayers, our spiritual gifts, nor our temporal things that we persevere to the end, but it is only by “looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith,” for He and He

alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no man will ever see the Father in that last day but through Him (Joh 14:6).

Oh, I pray that the Holy Spirit will take these words home to our hearts, that we will give heed to the nature of this perseverance which we are to persevere in, and seek the Lord alone by His grace to hold us to the end.

He's my rest when I am weary, my joy when I am glad;
My cheer when my path is dreary, my comfort when I'm sad;
He holds me when I'm slipping, He lifts me if I fall;
To me He is most precious; He is my all in all!

VI. The Holy Spirit's Work in the Believer

Dear friends, it is with rejoicing that we send forth this next message today in our current series on *eternal security: God's preservation and man's perseverance*. It is with rejoicing, because our blessed Lord is good, gracious, merciful, and faithful unto us to leave upon the pages of Holy Writ such a blessed teaching for His children: a teaching that honors Him, comforts His people, and gives us a solid foundation on which to stand in these perilous days in which we live. The people of God in all ages have had this foundation to stand upon, which foundation is laid in the blood of Christ and secured by the divine power of our omnipotent God Who cannot fail, Who cannot lie, and Who will not put His people to shame.

If you remember in our last two messages, we spoke to you concerning the thought that each believing child of God must hold fast in perseverance to the end because he is commanded to do so from the Word of God. We have shown you how we are to persevere 1) in holiness; 2) in the knowledge of God; 3) in a firm stand on the foundation of Christ and His precious truth; 4) in loyalty to Christ; 5) in obedience to Christ; 6) in fruitfulness; and 7) in looking every day, every hour, and every moment to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Now today I desire to look at the second point concerning perseverance, continuing with man's side of this truth: *the believing child of God will hold fast to the end because of what has been worked in him by God the Holy Spirit*, based upon the all-sufficiency of the grace of God as given us in the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He holds fast in faith as he pleads the precious promises of God's Word, for this blessed truth of the final perseverance of the saints is written into the fiber of every promise of God's Word for His people. What encouragement in the day of battle is the promise found in Hebrews 13:5, where our Lord tells His people, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"! Literally it can be translated from the Greek, "I will not, I will not, I will not in any degree leave you helpless, nor forsake nor let you down, nor relax my hold on you—assuredly not." Oh what encouragement this promise has been to my heart on so many occasions when Satan, sin, and the world have done their

best to shake the foundation of Christ in my soul, and all hell's demons have fought against us, endeavoring to turn us back to perdition! I say it has been a precious assurance to my soul.

Again in 1 Corinthians 10:13 we see another precious promise given for the encouraging of God's people to press on, to trust on, and to fight on. Listen! "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." My friend, here in this verse is such strength and comfort to the dear child of God. The Holy Spirit tells us here that we will have temptations or testings. They will be hard at times, but our God is faithful and will not let us be tempted or tested above that which we are able to bear. How does He do this? He makes a way of escape in the testing itself by bringing us through it, out into the glorious sunshine of His love. Yes, He is faithful to His Word in that He will *never* leave nor forsake us. I have written "T & P" beside this promise—"Tried and Proven"—for my blessed Lord has shown Himself faithful time after time since He saved me, to bring me through every testing. Surely He has given this promise to His people to assure us along life's pathway.

Another blessed promise that has been pled by God's children down through the centuries has been 1 Peter 5:10: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." Here God says He has called us unto His eternal glory, that we will suffer a while, but it is only to make us like Him in perfection in glory, which will be after we have been established, strengthened and settled. He says that He shall perfect that which pertaineth unto every one of His people (Psa 138:8), and He shall bring us all into His glory, because He has bought us with the price of His own precious blood. Again, this same thought is brought out in Philippians 1:6: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Oh how many times this precious promise has been pled by God's people! How many times in the fierce battle with sin and Satan has your speaker cried from the depths of his soul, "Lord, O my blessed Lord! Remember the promise that You have caused Your child to rest in, that having begun a

good work in me, You will perform it until the coming of Jesus Christ! Lord, You said You will keep me to the end! So I look to You and trust You to keep Your Word by keeping me so I will persevere.”

Dear friend, do you see why God’s child can rejoice in the midst of every trial, every testing, and temptation of life? It is because he has the *sure Word of God*, that God will keep him to the end. He has the *sure Word of God* that sin shall not have dominion over him. Yes, he is not under the Law for condemnation, but under *grace*, and this grace of God now reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 6:14; 5:21).

The sixth chapter of Romans is another blessed portion of God’s Word that is so precious to the born-again child of God and causes him to rejoice in this great truth of final perseverance in Christ. In this blessed chapter, he reads and understands by faith that he is dead to sin. Yes, *dead to sin*! His old man has been crucified with Christ, and in his spirit he has been freed from sin’s power and dominion, so now he has become the servant of righteousness. His fruit is unto holiness, and his end is everlasting life. Why? Because “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:23). I say, how precious is this great truth!

You may ask, “How is all of this possible?” Well, Romans 6:4 tells us that every one of God’s children (every one for whom Christ died) was buried with Christ “by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Watch verse 5 of that same chapter: It begins with the word “for,” so therefore it is connected with verse 4: “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” Watch the argument here: If indeed we have been planted together with Christ in His death, then we shall also be in His resurrection. I say, what assurance of eternal security! If indeed we are His children by the miracle of the new birth (this having been worked in our hearts by the baptism of the Holy Spirit into Christ’s death), then we shall also be raised with Him in the morning of the resurrection. Because the one has happened—we have been crucified with Him—then the other shall also happen—we shall be raised with Him in the morning of the resurrection.

Oh, what blessed truths our God has given us here to assure our hearts in the days of our humiliation while we are still in these bodies!

Yet another promise of God's holding and keeping power to His children is the one made to us in Deuteronomy 33:27: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them." Here is hope; here is assurance, for it is the Word of the King that underneath are His everlasting arms and *we shall be kept from falling*. I say, Praise His holy Name!

If we would put together the expressions used to illustrate this precious truth of how He holds and keeps us to the end, it would assure our hearts greatly. Here He says we are kept because underneath are His everlasting arms. In John 10:28, He says that no one is able to pluck us out of His hand. In Isaiah 49:16, He says that we are graven upon the palms of His hands, so how could He forget us? In Colossians 3:3, He says that we are dead and our life is *hid with Him in God*. So how could He love us so and then disown us? You see, dear friends, this precious, comforting, assuring truth is written deep in the pages of Holy Writ and is a solid foundation on which each believer can rest in Christ. And since this truth is so written here, then I must believe it or I disbelieve God's Word. For this is the reason that in salvation God gives us the faith of Christ, so midst all the troubles and testings of this life, we can look to Christ and rest in Him, assured that He shall keep us to the end.

But again let me emphasize, as I have in past messages: this blessed truth of the eternal security of the believer and our final perseverance is not given us so we can go on in sin. God forbid! It is given to us *as an anchor of the soul* so we can assure our souls as we press on to the end. It is given us to help and encourage us in each and every battle that we wage against the flesh and the devil. And we must also realize that just because this precious truth has been abused, or because professors of religion have apostatized, this does not make it false! To try to get around those who use it as a license to sin by saying that we are able to "fall from grace" does not solve any problems. Or to try to use the warnings in God's Word of apostates as examples of those who have "fallen from grace," and therefore to say that the Scripture does not teach eternal security, is to fly in the face of much clear teaching. You see, the problem is solved by listening to Scriptures like

1 John 2:19, which tells us clearly about those who do go back: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” Yes, there are those who make professions, those who embrace the doctrines of God’s Word, those who for a while show life and dedication, but who after a while return to their former life, which shows that they had never been saved. It does not show that they were saved and then lost, but that they were not saved at all, or they would have continued steadfast to the end.

Again, when Peter (in chapter two of his second epistle) speaks of those who had escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and they again became entangled therein and overcome by them, he is not speaking of souls who were truly saved and then fell from grace (2Pe 2:20). No! He is speaking of those who only had *head* knowledge, not *heart* knowledge; and therefore they returned to their former life—they had apostatized. In verse 22 he says they were like the true proverb: “The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” They had been dogs and sows all the while; they had never possessed a new heart and a new nature, or they would have persevered to the end.

My Bible tells me in 2 Peter 1:4 that in salvation God gives us a *new nature*, a nature like the divine nature of Himself—a nature of holiness that cannot sin; and therefore the bent of the believer’s life is now after holiness (1Jo 3:9). My Bible tells me in Ezekiel 36:26 that in salvation God gives us a *new heart*—a heart that loves Christ, and desires to be like Him, to please Him, and to follow His example of obedience unto the heavenly Father. My Bible tells me in John 16:13 that in salvation God gives *His Holy Spirit* to indwell us. And now our bodies are His temple; and He, being the Spirit of Christ, is our *indwelling salvation*, so we now walk in righteousness and true holiness; and by the grace of God we do not whore after the things of the world. Therefore, these precious promises which speak of eternal security are mine, given to me by my heavenly Father, to assure me in the days of my flesh that He shall surely keep me all the days of my life and see me safely home at last. With these precious promises, He assures me that

nothing is able to separate me from His love, and that having loved me, He will keep me to the end.

In closing, then, I would say two things. Dear child of God, don't let anyone take these precious promises away from you, but use them as promises from your heavenly Father. And to you who are using the truth of the eternal security of the believer as a cloak under which to live in sin, let me warn you. You do this to the damnation of your never-dying soul. God will deal with you in judgment unless you repent of your evil ways and turn to Him with a broken heart, pleading His precious blood by faith. Dear friend, remember this is the sixth message in this series on eternal security, and should be viewed in the light of all the messages given. Study them with your open Bible.

VII. Fallen from Grace—Contrasted: Part 1

My dear friend, in this series of messages on *eternal security: God's preservation and man's perseverance*, we have endeavored to show you from God's Word that this is one of the most blessed doctrines, one of the most blessed teachings of Scripture; for in it we find that all of God's children shall persevere to the end, because they are held fast by the power of God. And if you have listened to these studies, you have seen with us that God has promised to keep His people from falling (Jude 1:24). He has promised us "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [us]" (1Pe 1:4). He has promised that we shall be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1Pe 1:5). He has promised that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:39). He has promised us *eternal life*, that we shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck us out of His hand (Joh 10:28). He has promised that all that the Father gave Him shall come to Him, and He will never cast any of them out (Joh 6:37). He has promised that of all the Father has given Him, He shall lose none of them and shall raise them up again at the last day (Joh 6:39). He has promised that all those who believe savingly on Him shall not come into condemnation, but are passed from death unto life (Joh 5:24). How precious these thoughts are to my soul, as I have meditated on them with you, showing you God's preservation—that God holds us, and that's the reason we persevere to the end!

Further, we have seen from God's Word that each teaching of God's Word underlines the truth of what we call "final perseverance." To sum up all we have given you on this precious and gracious truth which honors God's power and truthfulness, let us enumerate these for you. The teaching of *God's sovereign election* shows that all of God's children shall get home at last to be with the Lord, for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has pledged His Word to the Father that by His shed blood, His substitutionary death, His resurrection, and His intercession within the veil on High even now, He

shall save and *keep* His people to the end (Jer 31:3; 1Th 1:2-4; Rom 8:28-39).

The teaching of *the everlasting covenant of grace* by which God the Father gave His people to His Son as the reward of His obedience and suffering also underlines the truth of what we call “final perseverance” (Joh 17:1-6; Jer 32:40).

Also the teaching of *the once-for-all nature of Christ’s atoning death*, perfecting us forever in God’s sight, underlines the teaching of what we call “final perseverance” (Heb 10:10, 14).

The teaching of *the continued presence of the Holy Spirit in the child of God forever* underlines the teaching of what we call “final perseverance” (Joh 14:16; 2Co 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph 1:13-14).

The teaching of *the effectiveness of Christ’s intercession for His people*—those whom God the Father gave to Him in eternity and for whom He suffered and bled and died upon the cross—underlines the teaching of what we call “final perseverance” (Rom 8:31-39; Joh 17:11, 15, 20; Heb 7:25 with Luk 22:31-32).

Then we showed you from God’s Word that there is man’s side to this subject, for you see, God deals with us as responsible creatures; therefore, each believer must hold fast to the end in perseverance, because he is commanded to do so all through the Word of God. In this way the child of God shows that he is indeed a child of God. And to equip His children to hold fast to the end, in salvation God gives them a new heart (Eze 36:26); He gives them a new nature (2Pe 1:4); He gives them of His Holy Spirit to hold them, to keep them, to lead them, to instruct them, and to teach them of the things of Christ (Joh 16:8-14). Also He gives His children His armour so they may be able to fight the battles in the Christian life (Eph 6:10-18). And, oh, I praise Him that He also gives us the throne of grace to which we can come in the hour of need that we may obtain mercy and find grace (Heb 4:16). And then He gives unto us exceeding great and precious promises that we might be encouraged to go on in the Christian life (2Pe 1:4). Last, but not least, He tells us that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28); so we know that everything that touches our lives comes to us

in accordance with the will of our divine God, our divine Father and Saviour, and we believe and understand that all these things are working together for our good; therefore we can trust Him to give us the *grace* to persevere to the end. So you see, my dear friend, the God Who commands His children to persevere and hold fast to the end, *gives* them all that is needed for them to hold fast, as 2 Peter 1:3 tells us: God has by His divine power “given unto us *all things* that pertain unto life and godliness.” Yes, by His power, by His grace, and by the indwelling Holy Spirit, we *will* hold fast, even unto the end!

Also from man’s side we showed you the nature of this perseverance. Listen, my friend! There is a way in which we are to persevere; and even though we’ve given you two messages on this, it is needful to summarize all of these things, for perhaps you did not hear them. From man’s side, the nature of perseverance is *perseverance in good works*, according to Ephesians 2:10: “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

It is *perseverance in holiness* (Rom 8:29; Eph 1:4; Heb 12:14; 1Th 4:3, 7; 2Th 2:13; 1Pe 1:2, 14-17).

It is perseverance in the knowledge of God (Col 1:9-10; 2Pe 3:18).

It is *perseverance in the faith*, being firm on the Christian foundation, never to be dislodged from the hope offered in the Gospel (Col 1:21-23).

It is perseverance in loyalty to Christ (Rev 14:12).

It is *perseverance in obedience* (Rom 16:26; 1Pe 1:13-16).

It is *perseverance in fruitfulness*, for we must abide in Christ if we are to bring forth this fruit of the Spirit day by day and moment by moment (Col 1:10; Joh 15:1-8).

So we see from all these Scriptures that this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints does not give us a license to indulge in sin or the flesh, but exhorts us to walk in the path of righteousness and true holiness (Eph 4:24). In other words, this is the essence of perseverance: it is in the nature and in the way of *holiness*—walking in that upright way of the Lord. You see, the individual who uses this precious teaching of God’s Word to go on living in sin tells the world that he is not saved, but is living a lie, for he who is born again by the Spirit of God hates sin, because it was his sins that put the

blessed Son of God to death upon the cross. He knows this, and sin grieves him, so he no longer desires to walk in it.

Listen to me now! I say it because the Word of God says it. Instead of using this teaching as a cloak under which to continue in sin, the true child of God does just the opposite. He hears the Word of God in 1 Corinthians 6:18 to “Flee fornication,” so he cries to God for grace to do that. He reads in 1 Corinthians 10:14 to “Flee from idolatry,” so he cries for the grace to do that. He reads in 2 Timothy 2:22 to “Flee also youthful lusts,” so he cries to God that these sins will no longer have dominion over him, but for enabling grace to flee from them. Then he reads in 1 Timothy 6:10, 11 that he is to flee from the love of money, which is “the root of all evil,” so he cries unto God for the grace to do this.

In summing up all that has been given in detail in the first six messages then, I must state that all any child of God has is given to him out of *free sovereign grace* because we deserve none of the mercies of God. Oh no, my friend! We deserve nothing but His wrath. *All that we have is based upon the work of our Lord Jesus Christ*, Who has paid our sin-debt in full. It is His blood that has justified us before God. It is His imputed righteousness which clothes us before God. It is His Holy Spirit Who indwells us; and it is by His power that we are kept from falling day by day and hour by hour. So all honor and all glory and all praise is given unto our great and glorious triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—Who has given us this *so great salvation* in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For as we’ve told you before, all that we have is from the Father, through the Son, and applied unto us by the Holy Spirit, Who is given unto us to save us, to keep us, and to get us to the end by His almighty power.

But we cannot close these messages without looking a little more closely at those Scriptures which are usually used to teach what is called “falling from grace,” which is quite the opposite of what God’s Word calls the “final perseverance of the saints.” Beloved, there are a number of things we must keep in mind when we look at these Scriptures used to promote this false teaching that a soul born by the Spirit of God, saved by the grace of God, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God can finally apostatize, or be lost and go to hell. The Word of God must be rightly divided! *We cannot build a doctrine on an isolated Scripture*; we must not make a Scripture teach one

thing when so much Scriptural light is given upon another way of interpretation. Oh no! We must keep in mind that the Scripture *cannot* contradict itself, because God the Holy Spirit is the author of it; and He is not the author of confusion (1Co 14:33).

Also if we would keep in mind that God's Word teaches in so many places that there are those who do not possess eternal life and therefore are only mere professors, then we would be kept from wrongly dividing the Word of truth, for we will understand that there will be those who will apostatize, and will fall back into perdition. My friend, the examples of apostates left upon the pages of Holy Writ are given, not to prove that these individuals were once saved and have now fallen from grace; but they are given to prove and to show that they never possessed true saving faith at all—they were only professors. Further, God has given us these examples to warn us against taking God and our salvation for granted, but rather to make our calling and election sure (2Pe 1:10); to cry to God to search our hearts to see if we are the children of God or reprobates (Psa 139:23). For if you will take time to delve into the Word of God, you will find that there is a line of truth throughout the whole Bible which teaches that there are many who shall say in the last day, "Lord, Lord, have we not done this?" and, "have we not done that?" And He's going to say, "I never knew you; you were never mine" (Mat 7:22-23; Luk 13:25-27). And that word "knew" there, is the same word that is used when it said that Adam "knew his wife" when he lay with her and children were produced. So the word "knew" means that God did not know them in the new birth—He never begat them; they were never His. You see, we must rightly divide the Word of truth!

We will only have time today for one of these, and the Lord willing, we will continue the subject the next time we come together, because there are some verses of Scripture that we certainly desire to go into with you, to show you that they do not prove falling from grace, but on the contrary, they prove that the individual was never in grace to begin with.

A text that is usually used to prove "falling from grace" is Matthew 13:20-21, where we read: "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." My

friend, this Scripture should be taken in its context, for our Lord is illustrating the effect of the seed, the Word of God, as it is sown in different hearts. In one heart (v 19) it finds no place to lodge at all. In another heart (v 22), it is choked out by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. And in these verses before us, the Word fell into a heart that received the Word with joy; and as soon as it was heard, the poor soul thought he was saved and made a profession; but he had no root in himself because there was no depth of soil (there was no work of the Holy Spirit to prepare the heart for the Word to take root). So the professor endured for a while, but when tribulation or persecution arose *because of the Word*, he was offended, and fell away from the truth. You see, this does not prove that he fell from grace, but shows he was a mere professor and his heart had not been dug up by the Holy Spirit so the eternal Seed, Christ Himself, could be planted in his heart.

But in verse 23 we read, “But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” Here, our Lord tells us, is the true believer. He understood what he heard. And what did he hear? He heard from the Word of God, by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, that he was a guilty sinner before God. He heard that he was a lost sinner before God, and could not save or help himself. He heard that he was under the just wrath of God because he had broken God’s holy Law. He heard that he must confess and repent of his sins and bring forth fruits of repentance (which are a broken heart and a contrite spirit before God) because of his sins against a holy God. He heard that he must look to Christ by faith for salvation, and that this is offered to him only on the basis of God’s free sovereign grace. You see, now his heart is prepared by the Holy Spirit, that is, broken up like the ground in a cornfield, for he hears and understands; and he now receives the good seed and brings forth fruit, persevering to the end, therefore proving to be a child of God. But the heart spoken of in verses 20-21, the stony heart, was never saved; he never had grace, so he did not “fall from grace.”

So again we see that these warnings from God’s Word concerning apostasy are not given to show that God’s child can “fall from grace”; but they are given to show our responsibility to keep ourselves in the love of

God (Jud 1:21), and are used by the Holy Spirit to drive us to Christ as our only refuge as we see our deceitful hearts, which are capable of doing *anything*. They make us cry unto Him to hold us and keep us (which He will do!), and to give us that persevering grace day by day, unto the end.

VIII. Fallen from Grace—Contrasted: Part 2

Dear friend, this is the last message in a series of eight which we have been bringing to you on the Biblical teaching of the *eternal security* of the believing children of God. We have been showing you from the Word of God that God's preservation of His people is the reason why they persevere to the end: The true Christian holds fast in perseverance to the end because He is held fast by the Lord Himself. Also we have shown you that each teaching of God's Word underlines the truth of what we call final perseverance. But we have also looked at man's side of this doctrine, and we summed it up in two points. Each believer must hold fast to the end because he is commanded to do so by the Word of God, and he will hold fast to the end because of what has been worked in him by God the Holy Spirit, based upon the all-sufficiency of the grace of God as given us in the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Now today we desire to continue the last thought we were studying together last week, and it is this: there are those who use certain passages of Scripture to teach the false doctrine of "falling from grace," which is quite the opposite of what God's Word calls the "final perseverance of the saints." These passages of Scripture used to prove that a child of God can be lost after once having been saved prove nothing of the kind but rather warn us that there are many today who say "Lord, Lord," who have not been born again by the Spirit of God nor saved by the grace of God and are therefore only "professors" and not possessors of Christ and eternal life. We saw this from the well-known passage of the sower in Matthew 13:20-21.

Let us therefore look at another passage used to prove this false doctrine of "falling from grace," and see what the Scripture really proves. Let us look together at 2 Peter 2:20-22: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened

unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

My friend, when this passage of Scripture is carefully studied in the light of its context, its true meaning will become obvious. In its context, it is easy to understand that the subject of chapter two is “false prophets” whose teaching was classified by the apostle Peter as “damnable heresies” and “denying the Lord” (2Pe 2:1). The apostle further describes them as “servants of corruption” (v 19), “wells without water” (v 17), “cursed children” (v 14), and “the unjust” (v 9). Then he compares them to unclean animals, such as the dog and the sow (v 22). But my friend, saved people are never described in the Word of God as “dogs” and “pigs”! They are described as “sheep,” who follow Christ (Joh 10). Never are they called by the names of beasts.

But I hear someone saying, “Surely these people were saved, since they are said to ‘have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’” Listen now! A careful consideration of this statement does not necessarily mean or imply that they were saved. You see, there are many people who have a notional and speculative knowledge of Christ who do not have a *spiritual* and *saving* knowledge of Him. Many know about Him who do not *know* Him. Many believe in Him historically who do not believe in Him savingly.

In Romans 1:21 we read a similar statement to this as found in 2 Peter 2. Referring to the Gentile world, the Apostle Paul stated, “When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God.” Now simply because it says they “knew God” is no proof that such were saved. The knowledge of God spoken of here is strictly an intellectual one, or a knowledge *about* Him. So we must understand that the people described in 2 Peter 2:20-22 were not born-again people who savingly knew Christ. The knowledge they had of Christ only resulted in a *temporary separation* from the pollutions of the world. These people were false professors and not true possessors. They were religious, but not regenerate. They were “dogs” and “sows,” but not “sheep.” My friend, when anyone returns to the world and lives in it enjoyably, it is positive proof that such a person never had a change of nature. This passage then is no help to those who teach “falling from

grace,” for it was given to *warn us* of stopping short of a true saving knowledge of Christ, worked in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Now we turn to Galatians 5:4 and read another verse that is a favorite so-called “proof text” for so many who attempt to promote their false doctrine of “falling from grace,” teaching that a true child of God can ultimately be lost. Galatians 5:4 reads, in part, “Ye are fallen from grace.” My friend, even a casual look at this verse is enough to see it is not teaching that a child of God may fall from grace. We should understand that the clause which is said to teach the “falling from grace” doctrine is in this case isolated from its context. The whole verse reads, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” Here the apostle Paul was writing to the Galatian Judaizers who were teaching salvation by circumcision and the Law of Moses instead of by Christ alone. You see, he clearly states that he had in mind those who were “justified by the law.” It was such people about whom he said, “Ye are fallen from grace.” In light of this, I would ask a question: Can a person be justified by the Law? The answer is, “No,” for the Bible plainly says, “by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal 2:16). Now, if these Galatians were not actually justified by the Law, they were not actually fallen from grace. So this passage of Scripture in Galatians 5:4 is not teaching that saved people may fall from grace!

Then the question is asked, “What is it teaching?” The apostle Paul, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, is simply teaching that those unsaved legalizers who were looking to the Law for salvation had in fact fallen out of the *realm* or sphere of grace into the *realm* or sphere of works, in as much as grace and works cannot be mixed as a basis for acceptance with God. These false teachers in Galatia believed that a person was not saved by Christ alone, but Christ *plus* the keeping of the Mosaic Law. So again we say, this verse does *not* teach falling from grace, but shows us that a man must be saved *by Christ alone*, by *His grace alone*, and not a mixture of grace and works.

Let us look at another verse that many use as proof that a child of God can “fall from grace.” 1 Corinthians 9:27 reads, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” Now the word “castaway” in the

Greek means “counterfeit,” or “rejected.” Paul was definitely not saying that he feared he may become lost as the apostasy advocates teach! To clinch the matter, let us hear him speak for himself in 2 Timothy 1:12: “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” Now, does that sound like he feared he might become a reprobate? *No!* So I ask, What are we to understand concerning his teaching in 1 Corinthians 9:27? This: he is simply teaching the *necessity of perseverance*. He saw that perseverance was divinely linked with salvation, and that he had to exercise self-discipline and run the race in order not to be rejected. It is true that the saved *must* persevere, but it is also true that they *will* persevere. You see, God’s responsibility is to preserve; It is ours to persevere. So we see then, that this verse does *not* teach the possibility of apostasy from Christ.

Turn with me now to Revelation 3:5 and let us look at another verse that is used by many to teach falling from grace: “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.” Now what does this verse of Scripture teach? My friend, it is *not* teaching the possibility of a saved person becoming lost, but the *necessity of perseverance*. You see, the apostle John sets forth here several blessings which are bestowed upon the overcomer, or the one who perseveres unto the end. I want you to notice, these are benefits derived from enduring and overcoming. They are promises made to the overcomers; and my friend, there is no example in the Bible of a true child of God not being an overcomer. There are many examples of false professors or spurious converts not becoming overcomers. These could not lose their salvation, for they never had it! Neither could their names be blotted out of the Book of Life, because their names were never in it. So we see then that when a professing Christian doesn’t persevere and become an overcomer, it indicates and proves that he is merely a *professing* Christian and no real Christian at all. He only *appeared* to be a Christian. And this may be proved by Luke 8:18, where our Lord said, “Whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.”

Now before we close this message, let us look at one more passage of Scripture along the line we have been studying and see what it teaches. We

read in Hebrews 6:4-6 these words: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” These verses have puzzled and perplexed many people, but it is because they do not refer to genuine Christians; for no restoration is possible for the people described in these verses, whereas restoration is always possible for the true children of God as evidenced by Jeremiah 3:13-14; Hosea 14:1-4; 1 John 1:9; and 2:2.

We know some kind of apostasy is taught in these verses, so we ask, apostasy *by whom* and *from what*? The people to whom this refers are those who were enlightened and not saved. They were Hebrews, who through the influence of the preached Word had become converted to Christianity, but not to Christ. They were—due to the persecution they were receiving from the Jewish community—going back to Judaism. Indeed they had gone quite a long way in Christianity, but they were not real Christians. They were converted from Judaism to Christianity, but not from Judaism to a saving knowledge of Christ. They were professors who appeared to be real Christians, but were not. Indeed they did apostatize; but not from salvation in Christ, for they were not saved. They apostatized from a *profession*, and not a *possession* of Christ.

Oh my friend, *this passage of Scripture is a solemn warning for all religious people today*. So I ask, Will you solemnly and seriously think with me about what these people had experienced? They were “enlightened”—that is to say, they received illumination or light from God. However, it was not a spiritually transforming light. Note also, they “tasted of the heavenly gift.” To “taste” is to have a personal experience of, in contrast from mere report. Tasting does not include eating, much less digesting and turning into nourishment what is so tasted. So the persons here described then are those who have to a certain degree understood and relished the revelation of mercy, and like the stony-ground hearers of Matthew 13, they have received the Word with a transient joy, but with no root in them. The tasting is in contrast with the “eating” of Christ found in John 6:50-56.

Also the “heavenly gift” they “tasted” was the Holy Spirit, Who was sent to convict of sin, righteousness and judgment. That they “were made partakers of the Holy Spirit,” or became companions or partners with the Holy Spirit so to speak, means that they were for a while willingly led along towards the act of faith in the pre-salvation work of the Holy Spirit. And it is also said that they “tasted the good word of God.” The Word of God had quite a powerful effect upon them when they heard it. But they did not eat and digest the Word of God, and consequently they received no nourishment from it. It did not become a part of them, nor of their life.

It even says that these people tasted “the powers of the world [or age] to come.” You see, they were greatly influenced by the miraculous powers that accompanied the new administration which began at Pentecost; but they were never regenerated. They did in fact fall away from that which they had received. Please note that the expression in verse 6, “if they shall fall away,” should read “and have fallen away” or “having fallen away,” for there is no “if” in the original language.

So my dear friend, we see how far a person may go in divine things and how much he may experience in the realm of the supernatural, and yet not be saved. Perhaps some of you are just like these Hebrews were—mere counterfeits. Remember, a counterfeit coin looks like a real coin both in color and shape, but it lacks the real metal to make it genuine. Perhaps some of you do not even have as much as these Hebrews had. Oh, my dear friend, let these verses search your heart, and cry unto the searcher of hearts to do His work in you!

No, the verses we have been considering positively do not teach that a child of God may lose his salvation, but rather they *warn us* to make *our* calling and election sure.

Now we close this series of messages on *eternal security*, praying that the Holy Spirit will use them to the encouraging and strengthening of the dear children of God; and to the washing the sand out from under those who are not anchored in Christ, but who have a name to live and are dead, that they will be awakened and genuinely saved before it is everlastingly too late!

A father was telling his little boy what kind of man a Christian is. When the lesson was finished the boy said, “Father, have I ever seen a Christian?”

What a stab for that father!

“What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God” (2Pe 3:11-12)!

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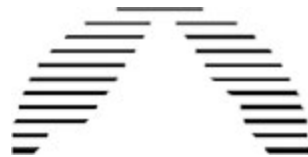
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