

12. THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

ROMANS 8:16-39

INTRODUCTION

- Saints?
- Questions?

1. "FALLING AWAY": NOT EVERYONE WHO SAYS THEY BELIEVE WILL PERSEVERE

(a) The reality of "falling away" or apostasy

Matthew 13:20-21, "The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away."

Matthew 24:10-12, "At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,"

John 15:1-2,6, 1 Timothy 1:19, 4:1, 2 Timothy 4:10,

"The perseverance of the saints ... does not mean that everyone who professes faith in Christ and who is accepted as a believer in the fellowship of the saints is secure for eternity and may entertain the assurance of eternal salvation... It is possible to give all the outward signs of faith in Christ and obedience to him, to witness for a time a good confession and show great zeal for Christ and his kingdom and then lose all interest and become indifferent, if not hostile, to the claims of Christ and of his kingdom"

(John Murray, *Redemption accomplished and applied*, p151-152)

(b) Understanding apostasy

- **Apostates can experience much of God**

Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:29, 2 Peter 2:20-22

- **Apostates were never born again**

1 John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us.

For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us."

2. REAL SAINTS SHOW THEY'RE REAL SAINTS BY PERSEVERING

Matthew 24:13, "but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."

John 8:31, "To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples."

John 15:6, "If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned."

1 Corinthians 9:27, "No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

1 Corinthians 15:1-2, "Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain."

Colossians 1:22-23, "But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation--²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant."

Hebrews 10:36-39, "You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.³⁷ For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay.³⁸ But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him."³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved."

Also Matthew 10:22, Hebrews 3:6,14, 2 Peter 1:10-11, 1 John 2:19

→ "Persevering" =

3. REAL SAINTS PERSEVERE BECAUSE THEY ARE PRESERVED BY GOD

(a) God has planned an unbreakable chain of salvation

Romans 8:28-30, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

TULI → P

God is sovereign over the whole of salvation

(b) God will keep his people

Psalm 37:23-24, "If the LORD delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand."

Psalm 73:1-2,23, "Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.² But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold... Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand."

Romans 5:8-10, 1 Cor 3:15, 1 Peter 1:5

(c) Each person of the Trinity works to keep us

- God the Father

John 10:28-29, 1 Corinthians 1:8-9, Philippians 1:6

- God the Son

John 6:37-40, Romans 8:31-39, Hebrews 7:25

- God the Holy Spirit

Ephesians 1:13-14

(d) Questions and summary

“They, whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

“This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.”

Westminster Confession (17.1-2)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- In the light of what we’ve learned today how am I warned? How am I encouraged?

HOMEWORK

- Next week we think about final glorification and the new creation. Please read Revelation 20-22 in preparation.

A HYMN

1. A debtor to mercy alone,
of covenant mercy I sing;
I come with your righteousness on,
my humble offering to bring.
The judgements of your holy law,
with me can have nothing to do,
My saviour’s obedience and blood
hide all my transgressions from view.

2. The work which your goodness began,
the arm of your strength will complete.
Your promise is yes and amen,
and never was forfeited yet.
The future or things that are now,
no power below or above,
can make you your purpose forego,
or sever my soul from your love.

3. My name from the palms of your hands,
eternity will not erase.
Impressed on your heart it remains
in marks of indelible grace.
Yes I, to the end, will endure,
until I bow down at your throne.
Forever and always secure,
a debtor to mercy, alone.
(Augustus Toplady; alt. Bob Kauflin)