

“He Will Not Let You Go” John 6:36-47 11/10/19 Steve Harden

“³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

⁴¹ So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” ⁴² They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” ⁴³ Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— ⁴⁶ not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.”

This is the word of God. Last week we spoke about the doctrine of election: one of the five points of Calvinism, the reformed theology many of us understand. But I want you to know, I think it’s really, really important to understand theology, because theology is really the science of God and the study of God. We need to know that; we need to understand it. We need to spend our time considering and thinking through who God is and what that means to us, to know why we believe and what we believe. But, frankly, it’s really not essential for you to understand and believe in the doctrine of election. It will not affect your eternity with Jesus. What is essential, and what we stand on, is that you need to believe in Jesus, and need to trust Him with your life as the sole provider of any hope that you have for eternity. That’s the main thing. I can’t say the doctrine of election is not important, I won’t say that. But the essential thing? Know Jesus.

So today, we’re going to be addressing another one of the five points found in John 6. We’re going to be looking at the doctrine of perseverance of the saints. Simply put, perseverance of the saints says that if you have genuine faith, you will never lose your faith. If you have genuine faith, you will never lose your salvation. You are secure and safe in the plan of God. You’re not ever going to revert back to an unredeemed condition. So today, we’re going to look at two different passages of Scripture. We’re going to look at John 6 and then we’re going to look at Romans 8 and see how these two scriptures play together. We’re going to see that God never ever starts a work that He doesn’t intend to finish. So why does it matter? Well, if you’ve ever struggled with assurance of salvation, you know how much it matters. If you’ve ever

wondered, “If I could mess up so bad that God would never accept me again,” and if that fear lives inside of you, and that angst is there, you know how important this is.

As I was preparing this, and as I’m giving it, I am thinking of a friend that I have, a dear friend, a Godly man who I’ve known for years and years and years who continually struggles with the assurance of his salvation. “It just seems too good to be true,” he says. And I say “It is! It’s too good to be true, and yet, it still is true!” And he knows that with his head, but he struggles with it and it has brought him no end of pain and grief and tears. And so, you know how important this doctrine of perseverance of the saints is. But let me stress to you, that your feelings will never give you the assurance and the peace that you desire. Assurance is not based on your feelings. Though they’re important. At the bedrock level, you have to understand and know what Scripture says, and you need to know the character of our God and draw on that foundation if you’re going to understand that He’s never, ever going to turn you away. You have to learn to argue with yourself and preach to yourself. I guess this doctrine is only important if you want peace and rest. And if that’s important to you, this doctrine is important to you.

So, what I’m going to present to you today, a sermon in a sentence is: understanding the purpose of God in your salvation is key to the assurance that you are a child of God and you will remain a child of God. Let’s see how this works out. This morning, we are going to explore the connection between election that we talked about last week, and perseverance. We find that connection here in John 6. It strikes me how solidly and strongly they are connected. It confirms what I’ve felt for a while that in reformed theology, or the five points if you will, that if you get one of them and you get one of them really well, it will lead you to the other four. These are strongly connected.

Now last week we looked primarily at verse 37, verse 39, and verse 44 that Amanda read to you from John 6. And I want to go back there because in each of these circumstances you see both election and perseverance of the saints. So, let’s look at verse 37. John writes the words of Jesus, “All that the Father gives me will come to me” and that’s election, right? “And whoever comes to me I will never cast out,” perseverance. Verse 38, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me. And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all,” right, perseverance? “That He has given me,” election, “But raise them up on the last day,” again, perseverance. “For this is the will of the Father, that he who looks on the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.” Verse 44: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him,” election, “and I will raise Him up on the last day,” perseverance. Do you see the connection? All the way through here, we have a connection between election and perseverance.

So throughout, He speaks of election. He speaks about how God has chosen to give His Son a gift, a people for His own possession, a people for His Son to love and to care for and to call out. And how the Son agrees to keep them safe, to keep them whole and secure until that last day when He will raise them up. Salvation is all of God and He grants this salvation. The result of the doctrine of election is the doctrine of perseverance. That's why actually, I know saints throughout the ages have called it perseverance of the saints, but that's why I like preservation of the saints, because I think it speaks to me more carefully. Because perseverance to me kind of means, okay you just knuckle down and you make it work and you work and you're staying faithful and you're doing the things that you should do. But preservation of the saints? God preserves me. He cares for me. He takes care of me. The preserving power of God is what holds onto me to keep my eternity secure. So that's John 6, but in Romans 8 we find the same connection, the same connection, and it's spelled out a little more explicitly. So, I want to spend the rest of our time today in Romans 8, as kind of a commentary on what it's saying in John 6.

So, Romans 8:28: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will he not also with Him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died, more than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written, 'For Your sake we are being killed all day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.' No! In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This is so rich and so powerful. Now let's look at God's purpose and how that works its way out into our preservation. Now in the beginning of chapter 8, Paul sums up the first seven chapters of Romans. In the first seven chapters we see our great need for salvation, early on there he talks about how there are none righteous, no not one. No one seeks after God. He speaks about the great need of salvation. Then he goes on to say that we can only become righteous by faith and trust, he goes on to tell us about the sufficiency of what Jesus did on Calvary, why His

death can be applied to us, there about the first Adam and the second Adam, he talks about that. He talks about the purpose and the limitations of the law.

But now, he comes to chapter 8 and he has two great declarations for us. The first declaration is found in verse 1: “There is now no condemnation.” Under no circumstances will a follower of Christ ever be condemned for their sin; they will never pay for their sin. Every sin they’ve ever committed, past, present and future has been forgiven, has been wiped away before the cross of Christ. So, we are no longer under sin, we are no longer condemned. But then, the second declaration is that there will never, ever be any separation from the love of Jesus: no condemnation, no separation. Paul is teaching that once a person is a Christian, there is never any possibility of him losing his salvation, and he is going to prove his point powerfully, and majestically, and poetically in this passage.

Let’s look at verse 28: “And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who love God and who are called according to His purpose.” You see, there is a magnificent promise here that I’ve gone to time, and time, and time again in difficult days, and I think you all have too. All things work together. Not that all things are good, that’s ridiculous. Not that all things are good, but all things will work for good and for the good of His people. God has so overridden the circumstances of life, that even the bad things will produce that which is good for his children. But this verse is not simply to give us comfort and peace for now in the midst of these difficult days, but ultimate comfort and peace in looking forward to that day when we stand before him. I tend to focus on the comfort now, because well, that’s when I really need it, right now. But as I look at this passage, I see that he’s really talking about ultimate comfort. Our ultimate comfort comes not from the first part of this sentence, but from the second part. Here we see why it is true that God works all things for good for them who are called. Look at the last phrase: “According to His purpose.” Everything hinges on “According to His purpose.” All things must work together for me because I am included in God’s purpose! This certainty of God’s purpose is why I can know that I’ll never lose my salvation. It’s all about God’s purpose. If God purposes anything, you can take that to the bank because nothing happens outside of His will. It is a fundamental truth that substantiates the perseverance of the saints. God is working out His purpose, and that purpose guarantees that all things work together for good, and that my salvation is secure. Let’s see how it works out.

That’s verse 28, going on to 29 and 30. We find the apostle here giving detailed steps and stages of our salvation, so he can show that each step is a part of His purpose, His plan, the outworking of the original purpose of God. God’s purpose is primary, and ultimately what matters. But you know, I’m included in that purpose. It’s really not all about me, even though it

feels like it's about me. I'm included in God's purpose. Let's look at verses 29-30: "For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified." See, here he's giving details of the purpose of God. He's working out His plan, showing it to us. It is certain. These explicit statements tell us that God has determined a certain course of action. A way of putting His purpose into action. And it's not going to fail. Here in this passage you find five, what is called unbreakable, golden links in our salvation. Do you see them? He says, foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. These are five golden links that are so linked together that no one ever, ever can pull them apart. Because it's the purpose of God, okay?

Very quickly, we see that He foreknew you, what does foreknow mean? It means God has set His mind and heart on you. He knows you; from before the foundations of the world, He knew you. He knew who you were. The next link is He predestined you. You have a destiny. God has determined for His people, those whom He foreknew, those whom He knew He predestines. Sometimes people say, "Well okay, I don't really like this predestination stuff, so why don't we think that God looks forward in the future, and He knows who's going to believe and therefore then having known, then we know that that's predestination." I would say, why does Paul use foreknow and predestination in the same sentence if that is the case? We know also in Scripture the word know, like Adam knew his wife? That's an intimate knowing. If that's the case, then God knows everyone. But we know that's not the case, because not everyone is saved. God knew. He saw you from before the foundation of the world. He knew you and then He called you to be His own. He predestined you. He has a determination for you and in time, when you came to be, and at the proper time the Holy Spirit changed your heart. He came in and He changed your heart and your mind. He took out that stony heart and He put in a heart of flesh and you believed! You saw, the scales came off your eyes, and you believed that Jesus is the Son of God and you trusted Him, and you put all your faith in Him. That's effectual calling.

From there, you have justification. That one-time act when God pardons the sin, just like a judge sitting on a bench, pronounces a sentence. He justifies you. He pardons the sin. He imputes Jesus' righteousness to you and your sin He imputes to Jesus Christ so that you can stand before Him sinless and perfectly righteous. Glorification, the last link of that golden chain includes sanctification, because that glorification is when we will stand before Jesus all changed, our sinful nature will be gone. We will not any longer be tempted with any sin. we will stand before Him complete, sharing in the glorified body of Christ. Right now, those of us who know

Jesus, we're slowly, ever so slowly, becoming more like Jesus. We're in that process. Once we're justified, we become more and more and more like Jesus.

So, do you see that all five chains are important, and you can't just rip out one of those and say, "Yeah I don't think so. I don't like that one." The chain is broken! God's purpose will stand. God says, "Whom I foreknew I predestined, who I predestined I called, who I called I justified, and who I justified I glorified." All of them are together. This is important when we're thinking about perseverance of the saints because God's purpose will stand. You're not going to mess that up. Can we ever say that "Yeah, I know that you purposed to do this, but I think I'm going to step away." No! That can never happen. It's also interesting that, I'm going to geek out a little bit here. On these five, all these elements are written in the 'erest' tense of the verb. I know it means nothing. Let's try this, it means that it happened in the past at a singular moment: past tense, singular. At one time in the past, God foreknew you and predestined you and called you and justified you and... glorified you? That seems like it should be in the future, right? Because we're not there yet? But even glorified is in the singular, past tense. So, do you know what that means? It means in the mind of God, outside of time and space, He glorified me. It's already done. He said, this is fact. This is true. This will never change. All the way back then. All these things are a true and absolute certainty.

So, with this background we see what God's purpose is for His people. Why are God's people foreknown? Why are they predestined and called and justified and glorified? Let's look at verse 29: "For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers." We read that God's purpose for His people is to conform them to the likeness of His Son, to refine them into the image of the Son, so that the Son might be glorified, the Son might be raised up, the Son might be preeminent among all. Our salvation, my friends, is all about Jesus and His glory and His honor and His fame and His reputation. The primary thing is that Jesus be glorified. What this means is that we can rest in the security of our faith because Jesus' reputation is at stake. Will the Father ever let anything happen to the reputation of the Son? Reason! Understand! You can be safe and secure, because God has purposed to save you and to rescue you from your sins and you will remain that way because it's His purpose to bring glory to the Son and nothing ever will stand in the way of that. You and I are a part of this grand panorama of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and their love for one another, and we get to ride along. We get to be a part of that and feel the expression of love the Father has for the Son and the Spirit. Because Jesus' glory is the ultimate purpose of our salvation, we can rest secure.

But I love how Paul's mind works, when I understand the way His mind is working. He says, okay we've presented all this truth, but you know what, I'm going to get emails tomorrow about this, or I bet I'm going to get an email about that, and then he answers it, so he doesn't get the email. I bet somebody is thinking about this, verse 31: "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" See, he's answering the questions that he knows that these statements have brought up in their minds. Is our salvation really secure? Is there really nothing that can affect our position in Christ? Paul says, really the only conclusion you can draw here is, "If God be for you, who can be against you?" If He has purposed to glorify His Son through our salvation, what is going to stand in His way? And as I look at these next verses, I see two questions that He intends to answer before He gets sent the email, and frankly they're the ones I most often get regarding perseverance of the saints.

The first question is, is it possible that I might sin so grievously that I might be once again condemned? And you see the answer to this in verse 32-34. I think this is the greatest struggle most of us have regarding our salvation. What if I screw up? What if I leave the faith? What if I turn my back on Him? What happens? What does verse 32 say: "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died, more than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God who indeed is interceding for us." He says, does it make any sense, that God who chose you from before the foundation of the world, does it make any sense when God sent His Son to die for you, does it make any sense at all if He foreknew you and predestined you and called you, does it make any sense at all that now once you're here, in the flesh, having been saved, that He's going to let you go? Is that logical at all? If God had changed His mind about you, chose to disinherit you, would it not be in opposition of His stated purpose for you? Does God change His mind? Does God say, yeah, that didn't work out as well as I thought it was going to. Isn't that ridiculous? The Son died for you, now He intercedes for you. Don't tell me that your sin is large enough to stop the purpose of God. You're not going to mess this up, because frankly, it really doesn't matter how good you were, or how bad you were. You needed Jesus and you came to Jesus and now He has you.

Second question, is there any possibility of anything else causing me to lose my salvation? Now that's verses 35-38: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or sword?" The question is, if my sin can't cause me to lose my salvation, is there anything else? Is there anything else in this whole wide world that could make me lose my salvation? Any great opposing force? Paul knew that we had a lot of adversaries, a lot of things working against us. The world, the flesh, and the devil are

all enemies of our soul. First, the world. The Bible presents that there are two kingdoms of people: there are those under the kingdom of Satan and those under the kingdom of Christ. We started under the rule and reign of Satan, and the domain of darkness. But He has reached in and grabbed us out of that kingdom and placed us in the kingdom of the Son, and now although we live in the world, we are not of the world. So, the world, then the flesh. We talked about this just a little bit ago, but that indwelling sin that is so frustrating that lives within us even though we're believers, the enemy that resides in my heart, that unredeemed humanness that just clings to me, that I so much want gone. The world, the flesh, and the devil. The devil is real. We have a powerful supernatural enemy of our souls who will lie to us, who will deceive us, who will destroy us if he can. We have some pretty formidable foes that cause us to question whether or not we're in fact a child of God. But Paul says, "No in all these things we are more than conquerors. For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God." My friend, your eternity is secure if you know Jesus. It doesn't matter what happens this side of the grave, if you are His own, if you have genuine faith, you're safe and secure and you can rest. You can lay your head down on your pillow at night at peace, because He's got you.

My friend that I was talking about earlier has struggled so long with fear and doubt and despair. I'm reminded of the story of Pilgrim's Progress, you know, John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, about Christian on his journey from the City of Destruction to the City of God? Do you remember him in his time in the Doubting Castle? Has anyone read this book? If not, put it on your list. You need to read Pilgrim's Progress. But Christian spent some time in the prison of Doubting Castle kept by the giant Despair, and it was only when Christ awakened him and reminded him that he had a key in his pocket, and the key was promise, the promises of God. And so, with that, he and his companion, Hope, were able to unlock the prison doors and escape. In much the same way, my friend, I don't know if you struggle with whether or not you're a Christian or not, many of us do. I understand. The place to go is not 'How do I feel today?' The place to go is to the character and the nature of God and what He has written for us. Now, is it going to solve all the problems? No. Because sometimes we just have temperaments that tend to doubt and fear. Some of us know what I'm talking about. Some of us are just, okay, no fear no doubt, but there are others that have that temperament. To my friend, and to those who struggle as he does, look to Jesus. Look to the nature of what God has done for you in sending His Son. Will He ever go back on His promise? No. He won't. Let's pray together.

Father, you know the condition of our hearts. Would you help the information that we find in our head, would you somehow get it to our heart? May your Holy Spirit speak strongly to

us? May the truth that you have called us and known us before the foundation of the world, that you have called us to be your children and have declared that You love us and You care about us, would that understanding find its way deep into our hearts? We need You. Speak to us, oh God, that it has never been about how well we did or our performance or our sinlessness, but all about the love gift that You wanted to give to Your Son. Bring understanding and peace to us, I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Well, now we come to the time of the Lord's Supper, a time when we are reminded that we look to Jesus alone for our salvation. We look to Him alone and trust Him alone for forgiveness of sin. We believe and we trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ. I long for you to have full security and confidence in what Christ has done for you. I long for that. You will not have any peace and rest until you have that. But the only way to have that is to look outside of yourself to what Jesus has done for you. In Communion we talk about an experience, what Christ has done for us on Calvary's cross, His broken body and His shed blood. On that night before His last day He had His disciples in the upper room and He said, after He had blessed and broken the bread: "This is my body which is broken for you, do this in remembrance of me." And in the same way, after the supper He took the cup, and He said: "This is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you partake of it, in remembrance of me."

Here at Ethos, at the Lord's Table we welcome all those who know Jesus and trust Him for their salvation to the table. If you are here this morning and you don't know your position in Christ, you don't really know that you trust Him, or you know that you haven't, let me ask you not to participate in the table, not to take the elements. Because this is very precious to us, and if you would, take this time to consider trusting Him. Think about what I have said and more importantly, what the word has said to you this morning. Maybe today, trust Him today, we look forward to the time that you would trust Him with us. If you all would get in your positions and the way we celebrate here at Ethos is, we ask you to come up the center aisle and they will be standing at these two places here and then, go back out the outside aisle. We have our offering baskets here if you have an offering or a connection card for us to pray for you or talk about something with us, put it there. If you all would stand, I'll be in the back, I would love to pray with you about anything that you have going on in your life, so let's celebrate the Lord's Table together.