

## **Is.46:3-4 (WCF 17:1-2) “The Promise of Perseverance”**

**For the Children:** “perseverance” means sticking at something, even if it is difficult, until you have success. For example, you have to do a difficult maths problem. You just don’t get it! You feel like giving up. But you keep struggling to figure it out and finally you discover that you can do it after all. That is a situation where you have success by your own efforts. “Preservation,” on the other hand, involves protecting or safeguarding something. My mother used to preserve fruit: she stopped it from going off. The fruit didn’t preserve itself; it was preserved by my mother. Well, God *preserves* His people – He stops us from going off, from falling away from the faith. But as a result of what He does, we can *persevere* in the faith, stick at it without giving up. **Questions:** Give some Bible verses that promise that the Lord will preserve His people. Why do we need His preserving work to stop us from falling away? What is it about God and His mighty works that give us confidence that we will persevere as His people?

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### **Introduction:**

#### **First Point: The Promise of Preservation**

- 1) He Has Borne and Carried: The observation that some leave the church and appear to die in apostasy does not undermine the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. 1 John.2:19 makes it clear that those who leave (permanently) were never “saints” in the full sense. Moreover, the Scripture issues promises that God will preserve His people. Our text speaks of Him having borne and having carried His people. This is applied to the image of a baby who has been born and is then lifted up and carried around by His parents. Yahweh begot and delivered Israel, supported His church and carried her to the Promised Land.
- 2) He Will Not Stop: This support and preservation does not stop. It continues through to “old age” for the believer – and for all history for the church. The Lord repeats the message that He will do this, He will carry His people.
- 3) A Matter of Deliverance: The idea of support and preservation is linked to God’s deliverance of His people. “Deliver” can imply giving birth or rescuing. The Lord saves His people by Christ “bearing and carrying” our sins, grief and sorrows (Is.53:4). This is by His initiative and grace: note the repeated “I/Me.” This contrasts the idol-gods of Babylon, who could not even carry their own images to safety during Cyrus’ capture of the city (vss. 1-2). But Yahweh can carry a whole nation! This does not mean that His people experience no hardship. He deals in v. 3 with a remnant, after the Exile in Babylon. But He continues to carry that remnant. Ultimately, this is fulfilled in Christ saving and preserving His sheep (John.10:28-29). See also Rom. 8:31-39.

#### **Second Point: The Doctrines Behind It**

- 1) The Doctrine of God: We can trust the promise of preservation because, as the Lord states in v. 4, I will be the same.” He does not change. There is nothing that can thwart His will or make Him stop loving His people. He is always faithful to His promises. Moreover, He has chosen His people by an eternal decree that cannot be undone. See WCF 17:2.
- 2) The Doctrine of Christ: In that decree, the Father gave the “sheep” to His Son, to live and die for them. He bore and carried our sins on the cross, paid our debt to God, bringing propitiation, atonement, expiation, and reconciliation with God. His perfect obedience is also imputed to us. He daily intercedes for us. These things have been accomplished. Nothing can undo them either. See WCF 17:1,2.
- 3) The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit has effectually called us. He is the “Pledge” who has “sealed” us (Eph.1:13-14). He also sanctifies us. For since God did not spare His own Son, He will certainly give us all other needful things (Rom. 8:32). He will complete what He has begun in us (Phlp. 1:6). We are assured of our preservation by the clear promises of God, coupled with the nature of the work of the 3 Persons of the Trinity.

### **Conclusion:**