

“Of the Perseverance of the Saints” ◻ WCF 17 (TPH p929)

2024.02.18 Sabbath School Lesson

Hopewell ARPC, Culleoka, TN

1. 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. a

a. John 10:25-30 25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. 26 But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. 30 I and My Father are one.” ■ Phil 1:3–6 3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ ■ 1Pet 1:3–9 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls. ■ 2Pet 1:10–11 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. ■ 1John 3:7–9 7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. 8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

So we come to chapter 17 in the confession, which is called of the perseverance of the Saints. This is a very distinctly, uh, Protestant and reformed Doctrine. The papists did not like it because They could not. They could not sell you things. At a fear. If if you were hoping in Christ and knew that all whom he had saved would indeed persevere.

Um, Until the end and come into the fullness at last of their inheritance. Uh, in him. And so, it's very distinctly. Uh, Protestant doctor and very distinctly reformed Doctrine. Uh, there have been those who Not recognizing that the work of Salvation is one that God does by Grace from start to finish.

You know, sometimes children we can we can focus on the means and someone will ask you. Why are you a Christian? And you, you can say, and it's not incorrect, it just doesn't go back far enough. You can say, well, I have Christian parents and I grew up in a Christian home.

I've been a Christian since I was born. I've been a saint since I was born, which is exactly the way the Lord talks about you. But even then, he's the one who put you in your home, he is the one who brought your parents to Faith. He is the one who told your parents, uh, what to do with you and, and gave them.

The means of Grace, he is the one Who blessed to you the reading of his word and prayer. And singing his word together, day by day in the home and the preaching especially of his word week by week in the public worship, he's the one Who gave his Spirit to make it so that you didn't just hear with your ears.

What the what the servant of Christ was saying in the pulpit but that your heart heard Christ himself. Jesus, God is the one who saves Uh in uh, entirely by Grace, from start to finish. Well, if you don't believe that, if you have this kind of idea that everybody has the same ability and the same opportunity, Then you might think that you brought yourself, Uh, into this salvation and you can bring yourself out of it.

Uh, and The weslands and the Armenians, they also don't believe this Doctrine of the perseverance of the Saints. Uh, in part. Because they're afraid that if we, if we believe this that we won't want to be holy that we will become complacent and passive. But praise God. The doctrine is, actually very useful for the one who has been saved and hates as Sid and loves God.

And the pursuit of Holiness, coming out of love for God and hatred for what is against him. But we have so much flesh remaining in us. That it is marvelously. Encouraging that God, is the one who has begun. The work God is the one who is doing the work, and it shall certainly be completed.

If God is the one who is doing it. And so uh the the wrestling is just don't understand what even the Bible teaches us. That it is a great motivator and help unto Holiness to know that God began the work God is doing it and God will finish it.

Um, not not really, uh, joking. But I said to her brother right before the class That this is really the doctrine of the perseverance of Christ and the persistence of Christ, and continuing and completing that which he has intended and that which he has begun what a precious Doctrine.

So I I think what we'll do is I'll read the three articles that make up the chapter of the confession. And then, we will jump into Uh, the scriptures. Of the perseverance of the Saints. They him God hath. Accepted in his beloved. In factually, 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 that means unchangeableness on unmovableness, you can see the the center of the word for motion in their children.

So don't be scared by the big words learn to use them. Um, words are very useful. It depends upon the immutability of the decree of election. Flowing from the free and unchangeable. Love of God, the Father nothing made him. Start loving you. Nothing can make him. Stop loving you.

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 which from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof. Uh so not only that they persevere but that we can be certain of it.

And then the third article, nevertheless, they Through The Temptations of Satan and of the world. The prevalency of corruption remaining in them and the neglect of the means of their preservation. Fall into Grievous sins. And for a Time, continue therein. Whereby, they incur God's displeasure. And grieve his holy spirit.

Come to be deprived of some measure of their Graces and Comforts. Have their hearts hardened and their consciences wounded hurt and scandalize other. And bring temporal judgments. Upon themselves. So yes, they persevere to the end but scripture tells us The truth about what the Christian life is like it is not, uh, easy and continually steady, Growth and experience of.

Of that growth. Um, and enjoyment of God. So first, then they whom God hath accepted in his beloved. Uh, and praise God is using the language of Ephesians one there, even though Ephesians 1 isn't given as a proof text. In factually, called and Sanctified by his Spirit. Do you see what?

He's just done there? God accepted in his beloved infection, called and Sanctified by his And so, father, Son and Holy Ghost, the whole Bible is a book about our Triune God. Salvation is all about our Triune God. And, But here, even in the way they're wording it you can see something that is the intention of God in himself and now the action of God in time, which he created for this purpose.

Uh, if father sought and Holy Spirit are the ones, uh, who are doing, if the the true and living Triune God, is the one who is doing this, how can it ever be stopped? How can it be interrupted? How can it fail? It can't fail, any more than God can fail.

Can the father stop loving his son? Can the spirit ever? Stop carrying out the will of God in the creation. Which he has made and to which he uphold and which he works. Of course, not you can almost end the chapter already. Uh, already, you can hear how to to deny or oppose.

This Doctrine, is actually a sort of a blasphemy, isn't it? It is to speak lightly of the Living. God, who is the one who saves? And, And praise God. Then you can see how it works the other way

as well. The more you learn the glory of God, the Father Son and Holy Spirit, the more you love his praise.

The more you know, his hour. The, the more you trust his wisdom and his faithfulness, Uh, the more certain you will be that this Doctrine has to be true. Because it rests primarily upon who it is, that is saving us and what he is like. So they whom God hath accepted and is beloved have actually called and Sanctified by his Spirit can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere their end to the end and be eternally.

And so the first proof text that we get on, this is John 10 verse 25, through 30. Where did the? The pastors of the Westminster assembly and we call the Westminster divines. Uh, not because they practice divination, but because they learn from God about God. That's what we mean.

When we say divines don't, uh, don't allow other uses of that word or words like it. Run to mess up for you. Where would they learn uh to think about this Doctrine? Uh not uh, primarily in terms of of the mechanics of what happens first? Uh but first of all, to think of this Doctrine, primarily in terms of the persons of the godhead and of God himself, where would they learn that?

Well it's it's not just human cleverness. Uh it is a divine revelation. They learn it from scripture and so John 10, 25. Through 30. Jesus answered them. I told you and you do not believe the works that I do and my father's name. They bear witness of me. But you do not believe because you are not of my sheep.

As I said to you my sheep, hear my voice and I know them And they follow me. Uh, notice the very careful wording there, not just my sheep, hear my voice and they know me and follow me. My sheep hear my voice. And I know them and follow me and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish.

So he doesn't just speak to us. He because he knows us. Gives us to recognize his voice. Isn't that a marvelous? Uh, Truth that our Lord Jesus tells us there. So the reason we follow him is because he knew us, and he is giving us eternal life, not just by speaking to us, but by giving us to know him.

Now, if that's how it began, I give them eternal life, it can't end. So verse 28 and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. Neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand? My father, who has given them to me is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them.

Out of my father's hand. Well, in whose hand is the believer. This is the believer in Jesus's hand, or is he in the Father's Hand? The answer is. Yes, praise God. That's good math. And even better theology. Or good logic. And this of course, uh, gets uh, gets Jesus and attempted murder.

Uh, they're they attempt to murder him for this. I and my father are one. And the Jews took up stones, again, dystonia Etc, let me encourage. New children, I just noticed, I read an extroverse. It's not on your sheet. The best place to read the Bible is in a Bible, not on sheets, not even on a phone.

Uh, as useful as it may be, and I used to travel around the world and teach and you can't take a thousand books with you. Uh well we can't take a thousand paper books with you. I understand convenience but it's good to have a Bible. Good to bring your Bible good to use your Bible because the preacher might go ahead and read verse 31.

And you want to be able to see everything in context. And if the Lord brings to your mind other scriptures that aren't on the sheet, you want to be able to flip and look and compare and And interpret the word of God by the word of God. But here, Uh, Jesus is saying, do you know who I am?

I am the God who knew you, uh, or at least in this way. He's talking about the electing knowledge, the electing love. I am the God who has loved and known all of my elect from before the world began. And so the reason they recognize my voice when I speak to them, is because I already know them and I'm bringing them by my voice to know me and bless God, many of us have had that experience of our Lord Jesus himself.

Where he we realized as he brings us to Faith and, and more and more as he grows Us in faith. That he has always loved us. He is, he is God from all eternity, and he is bringing us to know him who has known us in that love. And the certainty that this, Which began in eternity and then occurs in time as As he does this, and if actually calls by his Uh, which we will get to the certainty that that must continue forever is as certain as the power of the father and of the son, the power of the Living God, who can snatch someone out of God's hand, out of the father's hand or out of the son's hand.

Can a Christian Snatch themselves. Out of Jesus's hand. Yes, I know your remaining sin is very powerful. And your doubts arise in your heart and frighten you. With how real and serious they are. But is your remaining sin bigger than Jesus. Are your doubts? More real, more strong more serious than God, the Father.

All right, so Uh, wonderful to know who has begun. This work and one of our one, one of many of our favorite verses then is Philippians 1 6. But we're going to take a contextual run at it by starting in verse three.

Notice. Uh, Uh, how he begins in verse 3. I thank my God. Upon every remembrance of you. Well, if the Philippians brought themselves to Faith, Uh, if it was by their, if the Philippian Believers. Uh, by the power of their free will. Believed. Why are we thanking? God, shouldn't we thank the Philippians for believing.

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine making requests for you all with joy. They were needy Yoda and sintiki Are still fighting. And they need help and they get called out in this letter. Uh, and surely Paul is praying that they would be reconciled.

Uh, and yet he makes his request for them with joy. Why? Doesn't he know that there's remaining sin in eodia and remaining sin and syndicate? And that and that this is disrupting the piece and Fellowship of the church. Well, yes he does. But he knows that there is yet infinite Grace in the God, who has saved iodia.

Who has brought Syndicate to the faith? Who has made them sisters in the Lord Jesus by his grace. And so this Doctrine and perseverance, we can already see one application. Is we pray for growth, we pray for overcoming sin. We pray for resolutions of problems between Believers with joy.

Because God is the bigger Factor. Uh, in the equation. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine, making requests for you all with joy for your Fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, and of course, we have been making this point the whole time, but he finally makes it plain to them, says it clearly blindly being confident of this very thing, where does the joy come from?

If you ever read, Uh, or heard, or heard your pastor Reed or list, the fruits of the spirit. And he says love, Now we're we're going to see how uh one great fruit of the spirit who makes us like the father as he works out in US Conformity. To the sun we're going to see in in the morning.

Sermon Lord willing, the fruit of love. But one of the great fruits or one of the great aspects on the fruit of the spirit in our life, ought to be Joy. Well, one of the reasons we lack that Joy. Because because we are not thinking theologically soundly in a way that supports confidence being confident of this very thing that he who has begun a good work in, you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

So it is the Lord who begins. It is the Lord who finishes it. And the whole point of all of it is the glory of God in his son and he glorifies his son in Saving his people from start to finish. And so, You can rebuke me whenever I am discouraged and And pray God with confidence that I will receive it.

Well, Uh, we we You know, I keep reading and hearing all these statistics about pastors, who quit, the ministry. And uh, when you get together with pastors, you know, they're often discouraged. And, um, Could it be? That the the man in the pulpit needs to Have a sturdy doctrine of the perseverance of the Saints.

A sturdy confidence that God is the one who begins the work, God is the one who finishes the work he has invested all of this in. Uh, in the glory. Of his son, Jesus. That's what. That's what he is aiming at in his investment and he will not let it fail.

And so again, Children, and we want you to So to hear and know the, the key things in the Christian Life and growing them, here's a key thing. That you would love the glory of Jesus. Like God loves the glory of Jesus. Like the father loves to glorify his son like the spirit loves to bring about that Glory.

And the more that you do that by the spirit, The more you will realize that the God who loves his own glory and is saving you for his own glory. Uh will not let you go, will not let you stumble will not let you fall and you will have better things to to live for and to love and to do with your life than than the rubbish, which is competing.

For your hearts. Well, first Peter 1 verses 3 through 9, Uh, is next I actually I did not I don't remember what the What the original proof text. Is.

Uh, we'll do verses three through nine. Blessed. Be the God and father of our Lord. Jesus Christ. Who according to his, abundant Mercy, has begotten us again to a Living Hope through the resurrections of Jesus Christ from the dead. An inheritance. Incorruptible and undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven.

For you. Uh, there's so much there, we can't cover at all. But again who God is Father Son and Holy. And, God, for the glory of Jesus, whose resurrection is the source of all of this life. That he applies to. He is the one who begins it. He has begotten us again to a Living Hope and That the end for which he is begins.

Our spiritual life. Gives us spiritual life in the first place, is is so sure. And on diminishable uncorrupt Incorruptible to an inheritance incorruptible undefiled. That does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. Now, even if we don't read verse 5, you can already hear how impossible it is.

That God would do that for his son. That God would begin the work. That God would be preserving this. Uh this inheritance that display of the glory of God himself in his resurrected

son because no man can see God. But there is the god man who is God, he's a Divine person but because he has a human nature, we will be able to see him and if they beheld his glory who saw him in his humiliation, like John 1 says, how much more will we behold his glory in his exaltation and that is never going to be diminished and that is being.

Is it possible that God would reserve that for you but not preserve you for that. So, you see the way verse 4 goes with verse 5? Now we often I think many of us Uh, have a great affection for in memory of verse 4, an inheritance Incorruptible undefiled unfading, it does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

Well. Bend your affection, and And your memorization and the preciousness of this scripture into verse 5 who are kept by the power of God. Through faith. For salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Now, remember the word salvation is much broader than justification. It's not just being made right with God.

It's the whole of all that God. Delivers you unto saves you unto. As well as we'll hear. Not long from now. Lord willinglords bearing us in chapter 13 in the midweek sermons. Our Salvation is closer to us now than when we first believed. So, you know, stopped living for rubbish, stop living for sin.

Uh, live by the life of him for the for the glory of him who has redeemed you and who is bringing you To that salvation. But, The incorruptability of the inheritance is matched by the certainty that we are being kept, how by the power of God, through faith for salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

A couple pages over. Oh sorry, we need to get through verse 9. In this. You greatly Rejoice, though, now for a little while, if need be you have been grieved by various trials that the genuineness of your faith being more precious than gold that perishes. Okay. So the keptness of the faith, reminds you that It's better than gold.

Uh, incidentally. Uh, the fact that gold parishes reminds you that Uh, this creation is not contiguous with the new creation, like some would have Would have you believe that the genuineness of your faith though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ whom having not seen you love though.

Now, you do not see him yet believing you Rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of Glory. Okay. If you have now not having seen Jesus those moments where the the Lord restrains, so much of your remaining sin and gives you such a knowledge of an affection for the Lord.

Jesus Christ that you Rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of Glory just by the sight of Then most certainly God will give you not to see him only by faith but also by sight. Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Not that you can go fishing forever, not that you can have mansions not that you can whatever nonsense people talk about in their flesh about the glory of glory.

Now it's a new heavens and a new Earth and we will be physical and we will be bodily just like he's been resurrected bodily and we're going to love him. We do, absolutely. But the glory is Christ himself, The Inheritance as Christ himself, he is the end of your faith and many of us have had those moments in which the Lord stirs up our affection for the Lord Jesus.

And often grieve that we don't have them more continually and more intensely. Well, that is what God has saved you for and that is how it ends. With you by faith and sight loving and perfectly delighting and him fully, we can't even imagine what that will be like. But bless God

that we cannot imagine that it, but it will be like we may yet be certain that it will be Because he is the one who has done this for his glory.

Um, second Peter 1.

Verse 10 and 11. Therefore Brethren be even more diligent. To make your call and election. Sure. For if you do these things, you will never stumble for. So, or thus, or in this way for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the Everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And so remember, That. The Lord uses means. Uh, this is not saying that, you may live any, which way you may live according to your pleasure. Uh, and you will certainly go to heaven anyway, because you said a prayer once and someone Filled out a sticker for you and slapped it in the cover of your Bible.

No, the perseverance of the Saints is a perseverance and saintliness. Uh, and so adding all of these things. Uh, to our faith. So adding to your faith virtue knowledge self-control, those things here. This is the the mechanism by which God who brought you to Faith and God by whose Grace alone you can add this thing.

It's not like God gives you the faith and then you add these things by yourself. No this is look at the the language in verse 11. This is God supplying for you and entrance into that which most certainly must be yours. If, if we are not growing, In those things if we are not adding those things which are added whenever God, uh whenever God saves someone by Grace, whenever God gives them Faith, then we ought to cry out for.

We may be self-deceived but yet there is still in God grace to give Faith and Grace to give growth. And so this isn't uh you can live however you want and still go to heaven. This is a God can save you and God who begins saving, you will not just bring you to the end but he'll give you everything in between.

He will graciously give you knowledge virtue. Praise God, he will graciously, give you self-control Uh, in a culture that Um, Maybe lack self-control. New and amazing ways because we're so, uh, good at indulging ourselves. Now, Uh, praise God. He gives that. To his people. And then first John 3, 7-9 Uh, thank you for bearing with me a couple more moments so that we can Finish this section board willing.

First John 3, 7-9 very important that you remember that, a Believer does not have two Natures. We've said this several times, especially when we're in. Romans, we've said it a few times recently in Matthew 5 but a Believer has a new nature that is in Jesus Christ. And a Believer does have that which remains from his old nature.

Is no longer to identify with his sin. That's something else that is very important to be clear about in our current culture moment even within the church. So first John 3, 7-9 little children. Let no one deceive you. He, who practices righteousness is righteous, just as he is righteous.

In other words, the only way you came genuinely to love God, with all your heart. Soul, mind and strength. Not perfectly, but genuinely the, the way, the only way you come genuinely, uh, to obey him out of love, is if you have been made right with him. Justification proceeds, sanctification, but sanctification genuine sanctification is evidence of justification.

No one grows and love to God without having been made right with God through. Jesus Christ in the first place. He who sins is of the devil. For the devil has sinned from the beginning. So does that mean that you are of the devil when you sin? Well, you are actually doing things that

are from the devil that are from, your former nature that must be destroyed before you can enter Glory without Holiness, you will not see The Lord.

And so, yes. You hate. Uh, you hate, but when you sin, And you don't allow that to be who you are. You don't think of that as who you are. You think of that as an enemy wrong? Thoughts are enemy thoughts wrong words or enemy words wrong actions, our enemy actions you can't uh you can't coddle and love and wish that you could keep any sort of sin as a Christian because that is not you.

And if it's you then you're not a Christian. But praise God, the corollary For this purpose. The Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, Whoever has been born of God does not sin. Sin. Never comes. From the new nature of a Christian.

It doesn't come from your union with Christ. It doesn't come from the you who will be forever. Oh, it comes from within you. And you hate it and you cry out. Who will wretched, man, that I am, who will save me from the body of this death. But just like the end of Romans 7.

So also now first John 3, 9 thanks be to God through Jesus Christ. Our Lord God has done what the law couldn't do weakened by the flesh. He fulfills the requirements of the law, the righteous requirements of the law, in those who walk, not according to the flesh. But, according to the spirit, So, Whoever has been born of God does not seed for his does not sin for his seed, God's seed.

Remains in him and he cannot sin. Because he has been born of God and one day. Dear. Dear believer. There will be no remaining flesh. There will only be that you who has been born of God and doesn't sin and you will be free forever. Those whom he justified he goes on to say A few verses later from where we were just quoting from Romans 8.

He also glorified It is a future fact that is so certain that the Apostle tells it to us in the past tense. Well, praise God by his grace we hope next week uh to begin with the second article in the chapter of this prayer. Oh Lord, give us to know your glory to love your glory to pursue your glory.

We thank you that you yourself, do this and that you do it by calling. To yourself Those whom you have loved out of our sin even though we were by Nature. Children of Wrath and dead in our trespasses. And we thank you and praise you for the resurrecting. The resurrection Life of Christ and the resurrecting work of your spirit, who makes us alive, even by virtue and from the power of Jesus.

And his resurrection give us a confidence. That you who have begun? This work will bring it to completion. So that we will Delight to grow in Grace, to grow in Holiness to kill sin. And that we will depend upon you, the Triune God as we devote ourselves to doing.

So, help us. Now, as we come into your public worship, we pray that you would be glorified in it. We thank you that you have filled it with the means of your grace, that you would be glorified, even by continuing this work Lord. We pray for any Among Us who have not come to Faith, especially any dear Children who have not done.

So Grant that today would be the day. That your spirit gives them to believe into Christ and to know their adoption and Their status. Not just as something external but as a reality. Within and forever that they have experienced and been given by your spirit in Christ. In his name, we ask it.

Amen.