

**Colossians 1: 23; “If Indeed You Continue”, A Sermon Delivered  
at the Premier Estates Nursing Home by Pastor Paul Rendall,  
on the afternoon of February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017.**

In verse 21, we are told that we who believe in Jesus are reconciled to God in the body of Christ's flesh, through His death. This means that we, by the merits of His sufferings on our behalf, were presented to God the Father as holy, blameless, and above reproach in His sight when we first placed our trust in Him. This being reconciled to God means that Christ has satisfied the justice of God in relation to you. If you have believed in Jesus, His sufferings were accepted as the ransom paid for your soul. And now God looks upon you with favor, and He will love you because He now sees you in Christ. His wrath is forever turned away from you. His steadfast love will always surround you. You cannot lose what He has bestowed. From that moment that you believed in Christ, He looks at you, dear believer, in this amazing way, and nothing will change His mind forever. He will remember your sins no more. But if this is true, we must ask ourselves this question, then. Why in verse 23 do we find an “if” introduced into the description which follows our having been reconciled with and accepted by God in the Beloved? For verse 23 says: “if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul because a minister.” This phrase seems to undermine everything that was said before it.

I want to show you now that from God's standpoint, and His perspective, nothing can change His mind. Once you are reconciled to Him, through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, His full intention is to save you; and to save you completely and entirely. If you really have been reconciled to God, you cannot un-reconcile you from Himself. God will be faithful to apply all that Christ has purchased. But what we have here is our responsibility in relation to what God has done through Christ; our responsibility after we have gotten true grace, and we have been comforted in our being reconciled to God, we should exercise the graces of faith and hope and love that have now been implanted in our hearts. So let me give you two statements concerning our responsibility as believers in Christ, following conversion. 1<sup>st</sup> of all – In order that we might prove ourselves to be true Christians, we must persevere in the faith. 2<sup>nd</sup> – In order to prove ourselves to be true Christians, we must not be moved away from the hope of the gospel.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – In order that we might prove ourselves to be true Christians, we must persevere in the faith.**

Paul says that you will prove that God has saved you and called you to Himself, “if indeed you continue in the faith”. Continuing in the faith is the same thing as persevering in the faith. It means that you make continual and repeated daily efforts at deliberately exercising faith in the God of the Bible, and the truth of the Bible. The only true God is the God of the Bible. He is the true and living God; He is not simply a doctrine, although all the doctrine (all the consolidated formulation of the truth about God made in statements, declaring who He is) which is found in the Bible, is placed there so that you will believe it, and so perseverance is your continuing to exercise faith unto the obedience of the truths that you find there. How can a person prove themselves to be a true Christian if they do not exercise their faith in God every day? It says in Hebrews 11: 6 – “But without faith it is impossible to please God, for He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

This is where it all begins; believing in the existence of God and believing that He rewards faith. It is believing that God always has existed; there never was a time in which He did not exist. In the Bible, God doesn't go about to try to prove His own existence. He simply declares it. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” And God said, “Let there be light.” “And there was light.” “And God separated the light from the darkness.” If you are a true Christian you will prove it by abiding in the truth. And the way that you abide in the truth is by reading it and

believing it every time that you read it. The Bible is the word of God. It is only those who “abide in the word” who are truly disciples of Christ. (John 8: 31) You receive the truth of the Bible for what it really is, the word of God which performs a work in you. (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 2: 13) That work is done by the Holy Spirit’s shining His glorious light upon the text of the Bible so that you will spiritually see and understand it. But your responsibility is by faith, to continue to receive that precious truth of what the Bible teaches every time you open it, or any time you hear it preached. In fact, “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” But persevering in the faith, is to persevere in all the Biblical truth concerning God and Christ; those truths which are only found in the Bible.

Persevering in the faith is learning to pray over every matter of God’s truth that you hear which is from the Bible. You pray in regard to this whole matter of your being saved. Romans chapter 10, verse 13 – “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “How shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed?” Faith is receiving the Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that you are saved. But once you are saved, the Bible commands you to continue to walk with Christ, moment by moment, and day by day, by faith. “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with Thanksgiving.” So persevering in the faith means that you are continually praising God for what He has done for you through Christ and His work. It means that you are praising God that He continues this good work of supplying you with grace, day by day. It means that you want to receive the teaching and preaching of the word of God, from godly called ministers of the Bible, who have definite doctrinal and practical truths to teach you. These truths you receive, not because a godly man gives them to you, but because you know that it is a part of your persevering in your faith in the God of truth, that you should regularly engage in this good exercise of hearing the word preached.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – In order to prove ourselves to be true Christians, we must not be moved away from the hope of the gospel.**

“If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel.” When I say to you that you must persevere in faith and you must not be moved away from the hope of the gospel, I am not meaning to give you the impression that your continuing to have favor with God is based upon your perfect performance of these things; you having to do them to merit favor with God, or in order that you might go to heaven. All of the blessings related to these things were merited by Christ, in by His perfect obedience on your behalf, to God’s holy law; and His having suffered on the cross as a substitute for your sins. But I am saying the word “must” in the sense of obligation. Seeing that Christ has merited eternal life, and seeing that you are already the possessor of that life, you will continue to live in light of those truths, by hoping continually in Him and what He does for you, that He will faithfully teach you and lead by His Spirit through this life, and in His own time, He will bring you to heaven.

There are going to be times in your life as a Christian when your faith will be low; when it will seem to be non-existent. And there will be times when you will be moved by the circumstances that you are going through; so much so, that you might become downcast or discouraged, and wonder how God can continue to love and bear with you, because you see yourself to be such a great failure or such a great sinner. But remember beloved, this is why Jesus died. He died so that you will continue to hope in Him; that you will continue in the hope of the gospel. This is to continue believing in the sure hope, that what Christ has done for you, and what He is doing for you, in His supplying you with grace, and forgiving your sins, and cleansing you of them; His empowering you to make progress in you striving to be righteous, and your attempts at being faithful to do what He commands, all of this will be the means of His bringing you to heaven.

The perseverance of the saints is not your continuing on in the faith and in obedience to God’s word based upon your own strength and determination. That would be the fleshly way to go about

your sanctification. But actually it is a subtle form of legalism. You see a command, and just because you are a Christian, you think that you can keep it without ever stopping to think about the fact that you will need Christ's wisdom and His power in order to keep it from the right motives; to do it to the glory of God, and to do it out of love to God, and out of love for the people around you. Sometimes a person may think that when they become a Christian, that obedience is something that somehow happens automatically. You have been given grace; therefore now you will do and keep God's commandments, because you have been born again. You have been given life, and you do have the Holy Spirit. There is real truth in this, but more needs to be said. The flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are set in opposition to each other so that you may not do what you wish. (Galatians 5: 17) Do you mean that a true Christian has something within him that still wants to sin? Yes, beloved. It is the remnants of the Old Man, the Old nature. And the remains of that fleshly carnal nature would still like you to pursue after what is vain and worldly, and what is sinful and God-dishonoring. You must persevere in putting sin to death as a Christian. You must mortify the Old Man and his lusts.

You say – Didn't I die to sin when I first came to Christ? And I answer, you most surely did. You experienced the work of the Holy Spirit circumcising your heart, and taking away the dominion of sin so it no longer reigns in your life. You have been set free from the law of sin and death. But now your main responsibility as a Christian is not to allow yourself to be moved away from the hope of the gospel. And what does that mean? It means that you know that God has begun a good work in you and you believe that He will complete it. It means that you will take up the battle against the remaining corruption of your heart and you will learn by faith to resist the Devil, to overcome the world, and to put to death the motions of sin in your heart. What the Bible teaches is that all of your perseverance and all of your progress in living your life in obedience to God's word, and glorifying Him in the way that you live it, comes from His powerful working in you so that you can keep going on, and keep trusting in him, even when you are going through many trials and tribulations. The victory is found in Jesus' helping you in all of your obedience. You must be deliberate in going about to obey the Lord, as a servant is to his Master. But then you must also look to Him until He be gracious to you and give you the strength in your obedience to Him so that you will overcome.

So, we are seeing here, that to be grounded in the faith means that you are not being blown about by every wind of doctrine; every crazy untrue thing that someone might say about God or about the way of salvation, or what it means to be a true Christian, or how you ought to live your Christian life. You are grounded because you have believed in the true gospel of Christ crucified for sinners, of the necessity of being born again to enter the kingdom of God; and you see the eternal value and importance and necessity of pursuing holiness; that is, being more and more set apart to God's purposes for your life, and His gracious help to you in all of your obedience. His purpose is that you live to Him, and that you grow up into Christ. To be steadfast in the faith means that you will, by the grace of Christ, continue to hold fast to all the truth of the Bible that you have been taught. You will take to heart those words which are found in Philippians 2: 12-14 – "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." God is working in you, in His showing you more and more of His will in His word, and He is supplying you with the grace of strength, both to be willing to do His will, and then actually going about to do His will.

This is what the phrase means – "If you continue". And if you correctly understand these words you will not be weak in faith, or waver at the promise of God through unbelief; but you will be strengthened in faith, and you will give glory to God, being fully convinced that what He has promised, He is well able to perform concerning you and your salvation, from beginning to end; from now, until you reach glory, and see Jesus face to face.

