

**“What it Means to be Reformed”; Session # 48 – “The Grace of Perseverance”,
Prepared for the Adult Sunday School Class
on August 16th, 2015, by Pastor Paul Rendall.**

The last time we were together I spoke to you about Peter’s falling away from Christ. I showed you that it was not only Peter who fell away from Christ on the night in which He was betrayed, but all of the disciples fell away from Christ that night. I showed you how their falling away was not permanent but temporary, because they each had received saving grace from Christ before that time, and they would persevere in their faith even though they had temporarily been made to stumble and were offended by Christ’s having to go to the cross. All of these disciples were preserved in their faith through Christ’s intercession for them. “I have prayed for you Peter, that your faith may not fail.” “And when you have returned, strengthen your brethren.” Judas’ fall, however was a permanent falling away, because he never had saving faith. And not really having saving faith, he could not persevere in faith. Which leads me to say this:

1. The Perseverance of the Saints is their having the grace to continue in the things which accompany their salvation.

a. We find the definition of a temporary believer being placed alongside a true persevering believer in Hebrews 6: 4-12.

– “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.” “For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.” “But beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.” “For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

The word in the Greek which is translated “fall away” here, is a different word from the word which is translated “fall away” in Mark 14: 26. That word is σκανδαλιζο. It means to stumble or be enticed to sin. This is what happened to Peter and the apostles the night of Jesus’ betrayal. It was a temporary falling away; a falling away from which they all (with the exception of Judas) would return to following Christ. They would persevere in their faith; the faith which they always had even during the time of their temporary falling away. “I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith will not fail.” “And after you have returned,(or “after you have turned again) strengthen your brethren.” But the word for “falling away” in Hebrews 6: 6 is παραπτο. It means to “fall aside”, to apostatize from the faith. A person in this condition does not apostatize from a true faith which they really had; they apostatize from a false faith which they thought was a true faith in Christ.

What about this statement in verse 4: “For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,

Hebrews 6:5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come.” Doesn’t this indicate a work of saving grace begun in these who apostatized? No, it does not. A person may be enlightened to the truths of the gospel; repentance and faith in Christ, and yet not have had the eyes of their heart given saving sight. A person who is just tasting of the heavenly gift may not necessarily see their need of closing with Christ for a saving drink which would bring them eternal life and a changed heart. And a person may have the Holy Spirit striving with them in common grace at many points and yet still not yet have come to know the Lord. They may have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit in the sense of having received gifts, even to the doing of mighty miracles, and yet still be unregenerate in their heart. Judas received these gifts, and King Saul was numbered among the prophets. (Mark 4: 14-19 and 1st Samuel 10: 11 and 19: 23, 24)

Jonathan Edwards says this in his treatise on the Religious Affections:

“And besides, it is to be considered, that persons may have those impressions on their minds, which may not be of their own producing, nor from an evil spirit, but from the Spirit of God, and yet not be from any saving, but a common influence of the Spirit of God: and the subjects of such impressions, may be of the number of those we read of, “That are once enlightened, and taste of the heavenly gift, and are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and taste the good Word of God, and the power of the world to come” (Heb_6:4; Heb_6:5); and yet may be wholly unacquainted with those “better things that accompany salvation.” spoken of Heb_6:9.

So that although natural men may be the subjects of many influences of the Spirit of God, as is evident by many Scriptures, as Num_24:2; 1Sa_10:10; 1Sa_11:6; 1Sa_16:14; 1Co_13:1-3; Heb_6:4-6 and many others; yet they are not in the sense of the Scripture, spiritual persons; either are any of those effects, common gifts, qualities or affections, that are from the influence of the Spirit of God upon them, called spiritual things.

Robert Hawker says in his commentary on 1st Samuel 10: 9 – “In this verse it is said, that God gave him another heart. And Samuel had foretold him in the 6th verse, that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon him to prompt him to prophecy, and he should be turned into another man. And no doubt this change was wrought upon him. He had from this time another heart as to his dispositions, for no longer seeking asses he is now seeking a kingdom. And instead of being employed in his father’s service, he is now another man in prosecuting his own grandeur. But I beg the Reader to remark with me, that these changes are from what are called the ordinary gifts of the Spirit, not his special work on the heart. Saul may be, and Saul is among the prophets; but Saul is not renewed in the spirit of his mind for all that. Reader! do not fail to make this observation as you go, it will not only help you to make a right conclusion of this man’s history, but many a man’s history; and what is yet more interesting than every other, of your own. There is not a word of the regeneration of the mind of Saul in what is here said. He was turned into another man, from a poor man to a rich one, and from a peasant to a prince. And the Lord made him another heart to prefer a court to the country. But the new creature which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, is totally different from all this. It is a new heart, not a new form; a work of grace, not of nature. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. 2Co_5:17.

The “things which accompany salvation” are those sure graces of the Holy Spirit; His powerful working in the heart of the Christian which then the Christian cooperates with so that they can bring forth fruit unto God, and show love to His name in ministering to the saints. They are

diligent all through their life about this, and through this means they come to have “full assurance of hope”, being diligent until the end of their life. They persevere in faith and hope and love, and come to have a full assurance of hope, because they see in themselves that the God is at work in them, both to will and do according to His good pleasure. This is perseverance in the faith, and it is based on God’s preservation of them, and His continually supplying them with the grace to do His will according to His Word.