

What Perseverance Is Not

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Preacher: Tom Holland

[0 : 00] Last Monday afternoon I was preparing to leave my house for church at men's night.

! And all morning and that early afternoon I'd been rolling something over in my head. And I finally made the decision to delete the final paragraph of last week's lesson.

And basically that paragraph said something like this, this concludes our study of the perseverance of the saints. Next week we shall continue to look at salvation God's way by moving into the next and final item on the order of salvation list, which is glorification.

So that's what I deleted. Why did you delete it? Well, that's my next statement. I'm glad you asked that. I would have paid you to be here. What made me change my mind was that I became convinced I still had a couple of loose ends that needed to be explored before we leave perseverance behind.

And that's what we're doing this evening. And it's going to be a short lesson for reasons already stated. So we have spent a considerable amount of time discussing what the biblical doctrine of perseverance is.

[1 : 36] We need to also consider what the doctrine of perseverance is not. That's equally important.

And the first thing I want to mention is that perseverance does not mean that believers are free of all spiritual danger just because they are Christians.

to the contrary, their danger is increased. Through persecution, the danger is even greater for the world and the devil are active opponents against believers.

Consider the words of Christ and the great high priestly prayer. And whenever you read that in John 17, the whole chapter, remember that the Lord is mere hours from crucifixion.

This is Jesus talking, and I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world. Talking about the followers that were in His presence there and extending it out to all generations.

[2 : 52] And He says, I'm coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you've given Me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you've given Me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost, except the Son of Destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I'm coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your Word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

But when Jesus was speaking these words, Satan had already entered into the heart of Judas. And the world, and that world was the Jewish leadership, and the Romans, would condemn Christ before mourning.

[4 : 06] This is the deadly environment that the disciples were facing. And left to themselves, they had no hope. They had no hope. But here, the Lord Jesus prays for them, and they will be kept by God's power.

Perseverance does not mean that believers are protected from falling into sin just because they're Christians.

That's the second point. true believers do fall into sin. But not to the extent that they fall away from Christ forever.

Now we're talking about true believers here. The Lord told the strongest of His disciples, Peter, that He would fall away.

Peter said, I'll never fall away. I'll never deny you. I'll never abandon you. I'll die with you. And He told Peter, you're going to fall away. And you're going to deny me three times even before the rooster crows this morning, in the morning.

[5 : 27] But the Lord also assured Peter that he would recover. He told him that. Peter had the assurance that Christ was interceding for him.

And may I add something not in the notes? We have the assurance that Christ is interceding for us. That's ironclad. And the Holy Spirit, Romans chapter 8, is interceding for us.

The Lord is doing that for us. Now think in terms of some of the people God had to work with over the years.

Adam and Eve, who chose sin over obedience. Noah, who fell into drunkenness.

Abraham, who twice lied about his wife Sarah, saying, well, she's only my sister, and put her at risk of being raped because of that lie in the harems of the Pharaoh.

[6 : 40] Think a lot. Who chose to live in Sodom of all places, exposing his family to the sins of that wretched place.

Jacob, who cheated his brother Esau and deceived his father Isaac. David, who committed adultery with Bathsheba, tried to cover it up and failing that, had her husband, Uriah the Hittite, killed.

Uriah the Hittite had more character than the king of Israel at that point in his life. And then we got Paul and Barnabas. I don't think they came to blows, but they got in a heck of a fight.

And Paul and Barnabas fought over John Mark, and they had to part company. Later they came back together, but they couldn't travel with each other anymore.

They went their own ways. All of these and many more people of God sinned. As a matter of fact, all of God's people have sinned, but they did not lose their salvation.

[8 : 07] The operative word there is God's people, Christian people. There is not one biblical example of a true believer losing his salvation and being eternally lost anywhere in God's word.

Neither is there any evidence in the word of God, Old or New Testament, that you must be born again again. Never does it say that. And I've always thought that if anyone was ever going to lose it and never get it back, it would have been David.

And David thought that. That's when Nathan the prophet said, God has not taken away your salvation. And then he said, but.

And that will preach, Pastor. But. Well, I can't say it was Billy Gunt religion. He butted him all over the place. He butted him everywhere.

Fourth, four major things were going to happen to his family, including death of sons, rapes of daughters. You know, it was horrible. But. Third, perseverance does not mean that those who merely make a profession of faith are born again and thus secure in Christ.

[9 : 31] The Bible gives very specific warnings to those who hear the gospel, appear to trust in Christ, think as a result, they are saved, safe and yet they were never saved.

They were never born from above. Here is what Jesus and the Holy Spirit say in the authoritative and inerrant word of God. In John 8, 31, then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, if you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed.

There we see the doctrine of continuance. And I've said many times, but there's some in here that you haven't been here a real long time. You're not saved because you continue, you continue because you've been saved.

There's a difference. In Matthew 10, 22, the Lord said this, He that endures to the end shall be saved. You've got to finish the race.

And then in 2 Peter 1, 10, we read, Be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election. Be diligent to do that.

[10 : 50] The first two of those verses spoken by the Lord Jesus, the third one coming from the apostle Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I believe all three are confirming something that we really have not discussed in our study on perseverance.

And it's so important, I've set it out in bold type for the review of those that actually pick up a copy of the lesson. Perseverance is a grace gift of God.

We know that. when we possess true perseverance, that means we have within us the God given desire to persevere as well.

Not only does God grant us perseverance, we want to persevere. Our perseverance is the inward proof that we've truly been born from above and experienced justification by God.

Now, that statement does not mean we won't fail and sometimes fail miserably, sometimes fail frequently.

[12:10] That's a fact of life. When that happens, the true believer will eventually be drawn back by God's grace and God's conviction and he'll be drawn back to confession and repentance.

And if you've never memorized 1 John 1:9, do it before you go to bed tonight. The great statement on confession. What about those though who claim to be saved but show no fruit to support such a claim?

And we know that's true of a lot of people. I've got them in my family. I've got them in my family. To a lot of people, salvation is nothing more than a fire insurance policy for future judgment.

These are the people that sooner or later will abandon the church and primarily I think because they're uncomfortable around believers. Unbelievers are not comfortable and they shouldn't be. They shouldn't be comfortable. There is a passage in 1 John that gives us much insight into this truth and I've had some interesting discussion with some of my Wesleyan friends about people that lose their salvation and leave the church.

[13:38] Well, I always quote to them 1 John 2:19. They went out from us but they were not of us for if they'd been of us they would have continued with us but they went out that it might become plain that all are not of us.

Now, looking around the room we've got a handful of guys in here tonight that have been attending Highland Park for over 40 years and I'm one of them and there's others.

In that time frame we have seen hundreds of individuals or families that join the church many go through baptism participate in church activities for a while and then they fell away.

They're just gone. Now, I'm not talking about people that got mad. We always have those in Baptist churches and now they're going to First Baptist or Greater Presbyterian or you know whatever.

Good Shepherd Presbyterian!

You know whatever. I remember we lost a guy in my Sunday school class 30 years ago to Good Shepherd because they'd let him drink beer. Anyway, but we've seen hundreds of folks that join, they're baptized, they participate and they leave.

[15:16] And the reason for falling away, not to go to another church, but it's sadly sometimes it's success. Success in the world.

I've known more than one person. I'm thinking of one particular person right now, but I know more than one that did well at work, got promoted, more money, and more ability to pursue the dream that he has or he and his wife share or whatever.

House on the lake, large boat, and then suddenly they would leave on Friday night, return Sunday night, and church was totally left out of the picture.

And the next time I saw that particular couple, they were here for his dad's funeral. First time I'd seen him in 30 years because every Friday they were heading to Grand Lake.

Some fall away because of sin, especially the sin of adultery, including both men and women. And there's a host of other reasons that people fall away, more than we can name here.

[16:39] Just a host of them. Well, there are other passages that speak to our need to persevere in the faith. Matthew 24, verse 12 to 13, And because lawlessness will increase, the love of many will grow cold, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

That's the Lord. Colossians chapter 1, verse 21 to 23, And you who were once alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He is now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Great passage of Scripture. And then the writer of Hebrews 3:14, For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

God is the one who preserves us. But these passages and many others clearly indicate that professing Christians must strive to persevere in faith and obedience and that brings us to our final salvation in glory.

I heard one pastor in this church say it years ago said, you have been saved, you are being saved, you will be saved. That's how he described it. That's how he described it. Some people teach and believe that once they make a profession of faith at some basic level, they're guaranteed entrance into heaven.

[18:52] And I've heard people say it doesn't matter how you live your life, if you express faith one time, usually defined as saying a brief prayer asking God for salvation.

This belief is in stark contrast to what the Bible teaches. The sad truth is that it's very easy to be close to Christian things and be lost. Many years ago, John MacArthur wrote a book called *The Gospel According to Jesus*.

And there was a firestorm over that. And he was critical of one of the great seminaries, and I've been blessed by many of their professors, but he was critical of some of the professors at Dallas Theological Seminary.

and they stopped extending to him an invitation to come speak. But he had one quote in there from a pastor that was a graduate of Dallas Theological and in fairness, I must say that Dallas Theological cut him loose.

Not John, but this pastor. They thought he'd gone insane because of the stuff he was teaching. And he said, if I can manipulate a man to say a sinner's prayer one time, and three seconds later or three minutes later, he turns his back on the Lord, becomes a practicing atheist, even goes to some country, rounds up Christians to be executed, when Christ comes back, he's going to glory.

[20 : 23] That was his position. Dallas, even Dallas guys said, that's crazy. That's crazy. I think the words of the late Dr. R.C.

Sproul, are helpful here. This is what he said. In declaring the eternal security of God's people, it is perhaps clearer to speak of their preservation than as is usually done of their perseverance.

Perseverance means continued adherence to a belief despite discouragement and opposition.

salvation. The reason that believers persevere in faith and obedience, however, is not the strength of their own commitment, but that Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit preserves them.

Regenerated people are saved through persevering in faith and Christian living to the end as God preserves them. This doctrine does not mean that all who ever profess to be Christians will be saved.

those who try to live a Christian life and their own abilities will fall away. The false profession of many who say to Jesus, Lord, Lord, have we not done, will not be acknowledged.

[21 : 40] That passage used to bother me so much and now I realize they're trying to get to heaven on their own good works. We've done the following things. What do you mean we can't go to heaven? Those who pursue holiness of heart and love of neighbor and so show themselves to have been regenerated by God are entitled to believe themselves secure in Christ.

Belief and perseverance properly understood does not lead to careless living and arrogant presumption. I'm continuing with Dr. Sproul. The regenerate may backslide, fall into sin.

In so doing, they oppose their new nature and the Holy Spirit convicts them of their sin and compels them to repent and be restored to righteousness. When regenerate believers manifest a humble, grateful desire to please the God who saved them, the knowledge that He has pledged to keep them safe forever increases that desire.

God preserves us. But if we've been saved, God demands that we do those things consistent with our preservation.

This is summed up by the two greatest commandments, loving God, loving our neighbor. When we examine the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, we should be in awe of the grace and love that is ours in Christ.

[23 : 18] God spoke to Isaiah the prophet Paul thousands of years ago. I think it was 700 years before Christ came and was incarnated, took upon Himself human flesh.

But thousands of years ago from now, here's what the prophet Isaiah said in chapter 54. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

And that brings us to the conclusion of perseverance or preservation. we will start next time we meet on glorification, the last item on our list of the order of salvation, and then we'll see what the Lord has in store for us from there.

Thank you.