

Remaining Steadfast Under Trial

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[0 : 00] Well, we began last time with a brief lesson after we fed the ladies.

! And a new characteristic of salvation God's way. And it is the perseverance or the preservation of the saints! That is a cardinal truth of Scripture.

It is a central teaching of Reformed theology. Reformers such as Luther and Calvin and others held to it.

But even before then, I mean, you go back to Wycliffe and Huss, and you go back further, you go to Augustine, and you go back further to the apostles, and you go back further to the teachings of Jesus in John chapter 6 and John chapter 10, and certainly the writings of Paul.

But we're going to be dealing a few weeks, not too terribly long, on perseverance or preservation of the saints. It's the P in tulip, for those of you who remember tulip.

[1 : 21] I never thought Calvin would have agreed with that acrostic. But there's better ways to word it. I never thought it, but it's there. Many people claiming some sort of relationship with Christ do not persevere.

We've probably all known people like that. Over the decades, we've seen this in our church.

It happens in other churches. People come to church. They make a profession of faith. Go through water baptism.

They do the outward signs. And then slowly or rapidly, they seem to disappear. And we don't see them anymore.

And then they'll show up Christmas or Easter, the C and E. And then that becomes negligible. And often, you know, life's troubles come crashing in.

[2 : 31] Jesus said, in this life, you're going to have trouble. We had a lady that joined here, got baptized. The next day, she got robbed. Came to Dr. McBride, who was our pastor.

Said, what's going on here? Give my life to Jesus, and I go through water baptism, and I get robbed. And Mike said, you're not in heaven. This isn't heaven.

She said, I don't have anything to do with it. And she was gone. She thought she had, you know, this veneer or this insurance policy that now she's walking around and these things won't happen.

I mean, in the time I just said that, a Christian was put to death somewhere in the world because he wouldn't deny Christ. So this is the world out here.

Often people leave, and those that do almost never return, but they remain on church rolls.

[3 : 34] And sometimes they remain there for decades. We had a lady running for court clerk.

She'd been the court clerk for 26 years. She's long dead now. Full page ad, and she said, fateful member of Highland Park Baptist Church.

We didn't know it. We didn't realize it. And we looked at it. And sure enough, and she hadn't been here 25 years. The pastor in those days wrote her a little note and said, hey, I saw your ad.

Gosh, it'd be nice if you dropped by every now and then. And I mean, the next week we got a letter from a big Baptist church downtown. I won't mention the name, but she joined down there.

And she was done with us. But persevering through trials is proof of a living faith. You're going to have trials.

You're going to have them. And it's proof of a living faith. James spoke of this in the book that bears his name in the first chapter. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial.

[4 : 38] For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. I mean, there's a promise of God right there.

Remain steadfast under trial. Now, that presupposes something, doesn't it? Trials are going to come. And I dare say we could all just line up here and talk about trials.

And then when Nick got up here, he would talk about some trials he's seen over in the persecuted lands, and we would be embarrassed at the trials we go through. I mean, I've been over in the persecuted areas of the world, and I'm sitting there saying, well, you know, one time, one winter the heater broke and I stayed.

You know, and my goodness. When we find out some of the trials that happened over there. But note here that it says the crown of life is devoted to those who love God.

That was the condition clause there. When a person is truly saved, that person truly loves God. It comes naturally.

[5 : 48] We had family members that Diane and I would witness to that would say, hey, when I was nine, I took care of that stuff. Don't bug me about Jesus. I don't think that's loving God. I don't think that's loving God.

What is the evidence of the love that we have for God? Obedience to the word of God. The word of God. That presupposes something.

You're in the word of God. What does he want me to do? How do I live my life? John commented on that level of love in his first epistle, 1 John.

I love that. He says, we love God because he first loved us. 1 John 4, 19. Wow, what a standard.

We love God. Why? He first loved us. He has a love for his sons and daughters. So the Christian faith can really be described as a love relationship between God and his children.

[6 : 54] And let me say this. God is not in the business of bestowing salvation to people regardless of their attitude toward him. Truly saved people have a deep and continuing love for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It doesn't mean that life pressures don't come in. It doesn't mean we may walk away for a season. And, you know, it just happens. And then we, you know, we're driven back and driven to our knees. And I mean, where else do you, as believers, where else do we turn? And let me tell you, we're entering days where we need the Lord. And the days ahead, we're going to have special need for the Lord.

But all of this, people love God or they love the world. And in the second chapter of that great book of 1 John 2.15, do not love the world or the things in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. People love God or they love the world, but they don't love both. Now, let me say that the love spoken here is not directed at the appreciation of the beauty of creation.

[8 : 24] The writer is not talking about beautiful woods and beaches or snow covered mountains or gazing up in the heavens at night.

Out where I live, you can really see the heavens. That puts God's glory on display. The heavens declare the glory of God. And the firmament, his handiwork, his fingerprints, you can see the fingerprints of God.

The love of the world spoken of here is the world systems. The world systems. And all the world systems are temporary.

They're passing away. And all are under the control of Satan by the permissive will of God. For now, Satan, God has declared Satan is the God of this world.

Little g. That day is going to come to an end. But he's not our God. Our citizenship is in another realm. Our citizenship is in the heavenly places.

[9 : 31] As I said last time, we can identify those who love the world because ultimately they depart from the church. They may depart physically and many will, but they may also depart emotionally, mentally.

They're just not there. And 1 John 2, verse 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 they are not of us. Those who truly love God, love God's people.

Love his church. Love his church. And I've had people. I've had friends. I've had family members. I like God okay, but the church is full of hypocrites.

And I said, well, come on. We've got room for one more. You know, we can fit you in. Those who love God and his people stick around through thick and thin until the end.

[10 : 48] Does that rhyme? I didn't mean for it to. That sounds good. You can get that copyrighted. The apostle Peter talked about the test of trials as verification of faith.

1 Peter, the first chapter, beginning in verse 6. In this you rejoice. Though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold, that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise. Now listen to these results. Praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you've not seen him, you love him.

Though you do not see him now, now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

Glory. What a passage of scripture. What these passages teach us, and there will be more, true saving Christianity is more than someone who says, you know, there was a point in time when I believed some facts about God or some facts about Jesus.

[12 : 22] They even took me into a room, and a counselor shook my hand and he said, repeat after me. I remember that day. And it's certainly more than a person that may have been manipulated into repeating a prayer.

Ron Dunn, who's a great minister now with the Lord, he used to say, all I wanted was another scalp on my belt. You know, so I would give him this watered down version of the gospel so I could get a response, and then I'd put another scalp on my belt.

And that was the great Ron Dunn. But, you know, you're not going to manipulate anybody into this. There was a church, and I won't call the name, it was one of the biggest Baptist churches in the world, though not Southern Baptist.

But it was huge. And they had a luncheon for businessmen. Free. Come to our church, have a wonderful lunch. And the pastor would get up there and he said, we do that for a reason.

He said, they've been working and these guys are risers in the company, so they've been there. They got there early. They've been there all morning. They come over. We feed them.

[13 : 33] And they get lethargic. We got their stomachs full. And now they're kind of, you know, in that fog. And he said, there's no better time.

And he didn't use the word manipulate, but there's no better time to get somebody to pray a prayer to receive Christ. Then when they're just not fully, you know, I mean, they're tired.

It's nap time. You know, they're going to have to go back to work. Guys, come on. You're not going to manipulate anybody into glory, into the kingdom.

It's not going to happen. We've had people here, well-meaning over the years. I go back 40 years here that, you know, they grab a guy and repeat these words and they don't have any understanding of what they said.

But it's more than these things. It's much more. A true believer, though, is one who has an ongoing love for God and expresses that in your prayer life, in your closet.

[14 : 41] And if you're not getting in a closet, you need to get into a closet. Now, you don't have to be in a physical closet. But my prayer time is about 2 to 4 in the morning.

I get up and I slip out of bed and I go upstairs. Let me say, I'm retired. I still get up early because I've got feed to put out and stuff like that.

Then I take 3 or 4 naps throughout the day. But you need a prayer closet, guys. Trust me. We have this ongoing love.

That love does not dissipate or disappear because of one or multiple life trials. You're going to have trials. Jesus said this, I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace.

He wants us to have peace. That's the God of the universe. You remember the one that created the heavens and the earth and powerful. I want you to have peace.

[15 : 43] And he says, but in the world you will have tribulation. Then he says, take heart. I have overcome the world.

Well, you could take, that's something to take to the bank, right? You could take that. Hey, you know, we're going through some trials, honey, for you married guys.

Honey, we're going through some trials. We're experiencing some tribulation. But remember the one we worship. Remember our advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

He has overcome this world. He's overcome it. This is the life of the persecuted. And, you know, I love it in China.

And I've been there several times when they, a lot of the underground church, that guy will come and say, I want to join. I say, okay, we'll see. Let's give it a year. If you're still with us in a year.

[16:41] Because, you know, trials are going to come. They're coming. Plus he may be an agent of the government. As followers of Christ, we're going to experience struggles.

We're going to have doubts from time to time. But true faith will never be destroyed. Where'd it come from? It's a gift from God. It's a gift from God.

Now, we've already touched on this, some of this in our lesson. Let me dig down a bit deeper. And let's talk about the biblical teaching on perseverance.

And I often think when I teach that the best way to describe a Bible truth is by considering what it is not. Because we get these preconceived notions over the years and the decades.

And as we have seen, perseverance does not mean that we are free from all form of spiritual danger just because now we are Christians.

[17:45] In fact, guys, when that happens and it's real, we've really made Satan mad. You know, he doesn't like that.

We could establish the truth that things might even get worse for a period of time. Alienation from family. I love Dr. McGee.

Long past. The ministry still goes on. That's wonderful. But he said this. He said, you know, the Bible says when you become a believer, you need to separate yourself from the world. He said, you don't have to do that.

If you're genuine, the world will separate from you. You know, there's a boy that that will preach. In fact, he preached on it.

As a new believer in Christ, you become an intense enemy of Satan, of demons, of the world. And let's be honest, even our own flesh is going to hound you.

[18:45] It's going to hound me. It does. Into believing, well, maybe what I've done is not really real. Maybe it has no lasting value. You know, the Bible says you're going to battle the world, the flesh, and the devil.

And we do, don't we? But let me tell you, in my personal deal, I never minimize the war I have with the flesh. And I don't blame the devil for that, and I don't blame the world for that.

I blame me for that. And, you know, the guy that we would probably hold up as the greatest Christian we've ever heard about or read about is the Apostle Paul.

Well, read Romans 6 and Romans 7. That's Paul, as a believer, battling the flesh. And it was intense. And he said, what a wretched man am I, the chief of sinners.

And this is Paul. Consider the high priestly prayer of Christ. And that prayer is so magnificent. John 17. The crucifixion is just hours away.

[19:52] Jesus enters into his intercession for his followers just before the crucifixion. That is what he's doing right now.

Ever lives to intercede for us. He gave us an example of that in John 17. That's the inter-Trinitarian prayer between the Father and the Son. And we're the fly on the wall.

None of the apostles speak in John 17. They're just listening. And we get to listen. John 17, starting in verse 11.

And I'm no longer in the world, but they, and that's believers, beginning with the apostles, the apostles, they're in the world. And I'm coming to you.

Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one even as we are one.

[20:52] While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I've 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 listen to this. And the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, just as I'm not of the world.

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. And just a few verses later, by the way, he prays, and he says, And not only for these, Lord, but for all who will believe in my name through them.

That's us down to the 21st century. He even mentions us in the high priestly intercessory prayer. Well, these are truly ominous words spoken by our Lord.

[22 : 01] And especially so when we grasp what is happening in that hour. Satan, the evil one, was at that time entering into Judas, so he could carry out his betrayal of the Lord and Master of the universe.

The world was going to condemn Christ to death before the sun rose that morning. Two systems of justice, human justice, condemned Christ.

Jewish law and Roman law. By the way, those are the two bases for Anglo law, which is the basis of American law. So here we have Roman law and Jewish law intersecting.

And the world is going to condemn Christ to death before the sun rose. The disciples found themselves in a deadly environment. If the Lord had left them to themselves, they would have perished.

They would have perished. Instead, Christ prays for them. And they are kept throughout this trial by the power of the awesome Trinity.

[23 : 16] We see God at work here. Even Peter, in his repeated denials of even knowing the Lord, was kept by this infinite power.

Now, neither does perseverance mean that believers are now incapable of falling into sin. Believers do sin, but not to the point of falling away from Christ forever.

Not a true believer. The opening verses of John's first epistle make it very clear concerning sin. In 1 John chapter 1, all these are chapter 1.

In verse 6, if we say that we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

Verse 8, if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Verse 10, if we say that we have not sinned, we make Him, that's God and Christ, a liar and His word is not in us.

[24 : 33] And I'm really appreciative of the fact that the Holy Spirit tucks in, in the midst of all this, verse 9, among these devastating truths about our propensity to sin.

And verse 9 says this, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Memorize that verse. Memorize all those. Memorize that verse. Memorize that verse. As true believers, we have both our duty and our privilege to confess our sins when we sin.

The word for confession in Greek is homologeo. It means to say the same thing. We agree with God that, yeah, that was sin.

What I just did was sin. I see it in your eyes, Father. I see it in your eyes, Lord Jesus. And it is sin. We agree. We say the same thing.

[25 : 35] As believers, we are those who confess our sins agreeing with God that what we have done is in fact sin and affirming it that is a transgression of His law and a violation of His will.

We confess our sins because as believers we have been forgiven and brought into the family of God and we don't want anything soiled to come between a holy God and ourselves as His children. We don't want that to happen. We are being recreated in the image of Christ who never sinned. So when we sin, we confess it and the Lord is faithful and the Lord is just to cleanse us of that sin.

And then I always love it. The Lord goes further because He says, and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness. And I heard a pastor one time, I never considered that, but I heard a minister say, those are the sins we have committed and we have forgotten we did them.

I mean, we have such a sin nature, you know, and the Lord takes care of those as well. Now, confession is clearly linked to repentance and essential to salvation.

[26 : 52] We studied that in here. And that's important in our daily lives. Rabbi Zachariah, now the late Rabbi, he's very much alive with the Lord.

He started each day, one hour, his first hour was on his knees in repentance and asked the Lord to bring to mind anything and everything that I've done in the last 24 hours or beyond that I've not confessed.

And he started every day in an hour of repentance. I've told you before, while living in a monastery, the great reformer Martin Luther confessed for hours. He had to have set a record because once, and this was before the father confessor, Roman Catholic, he once confessed for 15 straight hours. He went back to his room and he remembered a sin that he'd failed to confess and he went back and he got the father confessor that day and he wanted to start over. He said, no, we're not going there, Martin.

You know, you're just trying to get out of here. You know, your duties of washing the floor or whatever their duties were. I mean, let's face it, in 1521, how much trouble can you get in a monastery?

[28 : 08] You can get in a lot of trouble now, you know, but not maybe then. Confession is linked to and part of the preserving power that God uses to keep us saved.

It's a preservation. We're talking about preservation. Perseverance, preservation. There's another important passage in the second chapter of 1 John. Let me read it.

My little children. Don't you like that? Tekna. My little children. I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

Well, that's pretty clear. But then he says, If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father. Jesus Christ the righteous. The Greek grammar here that's being used when we get to the English phrase, if anyone sins, is very instructive.

[29 : 16] And I'm certain that everyone here noted that this is in the aorist subjunctive third-class conditional tense. And that means that sinning is a very strong probability.

And if you don't know what that is, Mike will explain it to you after class. Just seek him out. The expression could be translated, if anyone sins, and it will happen.

That's how strong that expression is. If anyone says, sins, and it will happen. Or another way to put it, since you are going to sin.

Remember, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. God appears here as the supreme judge of the universe.

And let's remember, this is the throne room. And remember there's an interceder in the throne room. You remember that? Satan interceding against us. I mean, he's there saying, Father, you won't believe what Tom Holland did today.

[30 : 22] Yeah, I probably will. What do you do now? Although he knows. We have an evil interceder against us. But God is the supreme judge.

He is seated on the heavenly bench, judging all people based upon the standard of his perfect holy law. Boy, you want to be judged on that standard?

God has the power. And God has the right to judge. He has the right to condemn every person that has violated his law.

The Lord Jesus issued this very sober warning to us. Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell.

That's God. Satan doesn't have that power. In fact, he's going to be there. That's God. Well, now for the good news. Those who have been saved.

[31 : 22] Gifted with the persevering, preserving power of God. And it is a grace gift of God. Unto eternal life.

Need not fear a condemning divine justice. Why do we not fear that?

Because we have an advocate with the Father. Jesus Christ, the righteous. He's our advocate.

The word advocate used there is parakletos, meaning a counselor who comes alongside to aid his client. That's what it means. The image here is Christ is our divine defense attorney.

If you ever got to go to trial, it's nice to know that the judge of the universe has an intimate relationship with your defense attorney. Father and son. It's good to know that the son never prayed a prayer that wasn't answered affirmatively by the Father.

[32 : 26] Yeah, he did that. He's one of mine. I died for that on the cross.

Our advocate is the divine son and the judge is his divine father with whom we, he is in always complete harmony.

Complete. As our great high priest, the Lord Jesus always gains acquittal for those who are his own. He always gains acquittal.

And he is our advocate. And he advocates for us. There's an interesting play here and that was when Stephen was martyred.

And the Apostle Paul was leading that. He said, I'll hold your coats. You guys can throw those rocks harder. Stephen looked up. And he said, I see Jesus standing.

[33 : 30] That's the position of the advocate. He was advocating for Stephen before the Father. When Jesus spoke to the great high priest.

Or the high priest. He said, henceforth you will see me seated. That's the judge. That's the prosecutor.

One will see him seated. Stephen saw him standing. Very interesting. Great point. And again, I want to point out that possessing perseverance does not mean believers are without sin. Here's some brief examples. Noah fell into drunkenness. Abraham lied twice about his relationship with his wife. Placing her in great danger of being sexually violated. Lot chose to live in Sodom. And later engaged in a drunken orgy with both daughters from which they were impregnated. And the two men, or boys, born from their loins became bitter enemies of Israel.

[34 : 45] Part of this day. Though they go by different names now. Jacob cheated his brother Esau and lied to his father Isaac.

And his name means deceiver. King David had an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. And he tried to cover it up by having her husband Uriah killed in battle.

In the garden of Gethsemane, the disciples abandoned the Lord to save their own skin. Paul and Barnabas entered into an intense argument over John Mark.

And they had to separate. They had to go their different paths. They later reconciled. But they had to go different directions. All of these men sinned.

None were lost. And I love my Armenian friends at VOM. And there's a lot of them. And they really hammer me. I'm glad you're there now brother. You can take some of the heat for me.

[35 : 44] But I always ask of this. I said, give me an example in Old or New Testament of anyone born again, again. You know?

We talk about being twice born through our mother's womb and through the Lord. What about three times born? No.

It doesn't teach that. And I would have to say, if anybody was going to lose their salvation, it would have been King David. And David, in fact, told Nathan the prophet. He thought, he's taking away my salvation.

He said, no. He's not doing that. But there's a very interesting word there that Nathan uses. And I'm not going to get into that. We'll do that. We'll save that for another time. But Nathan used a, the prophet, Nathan, used a very important word, didn't he?

You know what that word was? God has not taken away your salvation, David. But. That, boy, that'll preach.

[36 : 44] But. And then he told him everything that was going to befall him. So there are consequences, aren't there? But he said, you're not losing your salvation.

All these men sinned, were not lost. There's not one true believer found in the Bible that lost his salvation. People say, what about Judas? He wasn't a believer. Look at his life.

You know, MacArthur wrote his dissertation on Judas. He said, I want to look at how could a guy spend three and a half years. And they didn't recognize him for who he was.

That was the whole basis of John's dissertation. Some fell into serious sin. They were even overtaken by it. But they persevered and God preserved them.

Perseverance does not mean that those who profess Christ without being born from above are secure. As I said last time, we are not saved by professing Christ. We are saved by possessing Christ.

[37 : 44] Those who hear the gospel appear to trust Christ, but in the end are not saved. There's many like that. Dr. Graham once said that he never held a crusade in a large city anywhere in the world where at least one pastor did not come forward for salvation.

I was in the room with him when he said that. That sounds impressive, but there are 8,500 of us in the room. It is possible to be quite close to Christian things and not be truly regenerate.

And remember Peter, he said make sure you're calling an election sure. Look at it all the time. Just review it with the Lord. Thank you. Thank you.