

The Perseverance of the Saints as Subjects of the Kingdom

by Ernest C. Reisinger

The Perseverance of the Saints is a biblical doctrine that teaches that all those who are savingly joined to Jesus Christ are kept and preserved for his eternal kingdom.

Duration: 56:52

Scripture: Jeremiah 32:40, John 10:26, Romans 8:30

Topics: "Perseverance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by giving a brief outline of the chapter and focuses on verse 40 as the text for his message. He emphasizes the importance of holding fast to our confidence in Christ until the end. The preacher then shares a personal story about his son going off to college and the challenges that young people face in maintaining their faith. He highlights the need for parents to have meaningful conversations with their children about spiritual matters without preaching at them. The sermon also references Hebrews 3:14 and discusses the concept of predestination and the assurance that God will not depart from His chosen ones. The preacher concludes by using an illustration from John 10 to further support the doctrine of God's faithfulness to His people.

Transcript

Since this is the last time I'll appear before you publicly, I do want to express my thanks and appreciation for the invitation. I especially am happy to be with some of my brothers that I don't see all the time, Brother Hux, Brother Littleton, some of the others that we do meet occasionally at places, namely over at Brother Hux's. I had a wonderful time with these men.

We have a hard time with Hux sometimes, but the rest of them it's pretty easy to handle, and we've had a wonderful time. It's also wonderful to see Dr. Smith again and hear him, and I remember days with him at the seminary there, but one thing I don't think I ever told him, some of the seeds, the heavenly seeds we sow, we don't always know the results. And I remember I was preaching in Georgia, and I found some people who were well instructed, and I made inquiry where they got such instruction.

They said, well, there was a man here once by the name of Smith, and they told me about that. I'll have to tell him about that sometime. But you left some, not only heavenly seeds, but the fruit of those seeds over in Valdosta.

So it's good to be with you again. All these subjects of Doctrines of Grace are large subjects, and the wonderful thing about it is we can't turn to the Bible and say, well, I'm going to turn to the chapter now on perseverance, or I'm going to turn now to the chapter on election. But they're interwoven, not only in the Bible, but they're interwoven with each other in understanding and in application as well.

So I'll do the best I can to separate one of them from the rest, although there will be some interweaving, I'm sure. I'd like you to turn today to Jeremiah chapter 32. This is one of those great covenant passages, or part of the covenant passages.

And I'd like you to turn. My text is verse 40. And I think rather than read all this chapter, let me just give you a little brief outline, and then come to verse 40, which is what I'm going to use as a text for the given subject.

In this wonderful chapter, the first 15 verses, we see our great prophet Jeremiah. He was imprisoned by this king, Zedekiah. And it was during the time of the, when Jerusalem was being besieged, and if you look at verse 3, 2 and 3, you'll find that 4, verse, Zedekiah didn't like what the prophet preached or prophesied.

God told Jeremiah what to do, to go buy a field in the land of Benjamin. And he did it. He did all that he was meant to do.

And then the great prophet has a wonderful prayer. It's a good prayer for you to study. The prayer begins at verse 16.

I prayed unto the Lord's saying. And that's a good prayer to study. And then it goes over to verse 25.

From 26 to 35, God confirms the captivity for their sins, reminding them in practice that sin would not go unpunished. But he also promises a gracious return to them in verses 36 to 44. Now it's in part of that promise that I want to read this text.

I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their heart, and they shall not depart from me. Another paraphrase or another one of the translations I have. It's really not a very good translation.

Some of it's a good paraphrase at times. But I think it's pretty good on this verse. It says, I will make an everlasting covenant with them, promising never again to leave them, but only to do them good.

I will put my desire in their hearts to worship me, and they shall never leave me. I will not turn away from them. That's one side of the coin.

They shall not turn away from me. That's the other side of the coin. We live in a day when many of us have friends and relatives who we've seen sometimes make what we thought was credible professions, and they're not in the fold serving the Lord anymore.

We don't know about them. I used to go to churches, and as I do some itinerant work, you'll hear people talk about so-and-so, how they used to serve the Lord, how they used to prize, how they used to... Well, where are they now? Well, they're out in the world. And we've seen many people make flashing starts, and we had great hopes for them.

And then those hopes sometimes, our hearts wither and die as we watch them and not see them progress, and many times see them turn away altogether. Now, there is a Christian doctrine, a biblical doctrine, it's one of those five that Dr. Smith mentioned yesterday, and it's called the Perseverance of the Saints. And that has two sides to it.

And it's a bad thing, it's a dangerous thing, it's a wicked thing to present half-truths for whole truths. It's all right if you present a half-truth and say it's a half-truth, but when you present a half-truth for a whole truth, it becomes very dangerous. And that's the reason I want to emphasize both sides of this covenant today.

It has two sides. The old Presbyterian confession, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the old London Confession, the Philadelphia Confession, they don't speak of this present-day doctrine that we know of as eternal security. And the way it's generally taught is only a half-truth.

The way it's generally taught is the preservation of the Savior who preserves his own. But the old confessions didn't use that term, eternal security, they used Perseverance of the Saints. As I open this subject up, or seek to, I want to quote from a book of what I consider one of the greatest theologians of our generation who has now gone on to be with the Lord.

I think he may have been one of Dr. Smith's professors at one time. The book is on the book table, I found it there. It's Professor Murray's book on Principles of Conduct.

If you don't have that book, I highly recommend it, especially in the application of God's truth in ethical situations. It's an excellent book. I highly commend it to you, or anything else he's written.

I don't promise it's always easy to read. But this is a statement that came from that book, and I want to give it to you verbatim this morning. Speaking of the covenant of grace, he said this, Do believers continue in the covenant relationship and in the enjoyment of its blessings, irrespective of persevering obedience to God's command? Question.

And he answers that question like this, It is one of the most perilous distortions of the doctrines of grace and one that carries with it the saddest record of moral and spiritual disaster to assume that past privileges, however high they may be, guarantees the security of men irrespective of perseverance in faith and obedience. Now, in the light of that statement, and in the light of my text, which has two sides, I want to approach my subject today by two questions, or two statements, rather. And then I want to do my best to buttress both of those statements with Holy Scripture, which is the last test and the final test and the last court of appeal.

The statements are these, The Bible teaches that all those who are savingly joined to Jesus Christ are kept and preserved for his eternal kingdom. That's the one statement. The Bible teaches that all those who are savingly joined to Jesus Christ are kept and preserved for his eternal kingdom.

The second statement is this, Only those who persevere in obedience and holiness unto the end have any reason to believe that they are of his eternal kingdom. Now, I want you to note how I said that. I said, because sometimes it's difficult to handle the doctrine of perseverance without handling the doctrine of assurance.

And I want to repeat the second statement again, and I want you to be very sure you get part of that statement, all of it, if you can. Only those who persevere in obedience and holiness unto the end have any reason to believe, now that comes under the head of assurance, have any reason to believe that they are

of his eternal kingdom. Now, I want you to note that I have reason to believe, or they have reason to believe.

Now, first, let me give two scriptures setting forth, and I can't go to all the scriptures that set forth these propositions. I said I want to buttress both of those statements with Holy Scripture. And first of all, let me buttress the first statement with just one passage of Scripture speaking doctrinally and an illustration of the doctrine given by our Lord.

The first statement, that all those who are savingly joined to Jesus Christ are kept and preserved for his eternal kingdom, the Scripture I want to use to buttress that is what Charles Hodge called a rhapsody on assurance. And it's Romans chapter 8, verse 29 and 30, 35-39. Let me read them to you to freshen our minds.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, one, then he also called, two, and whom he called, then he justified, three, and whom he justified, then he also glorified, and he lost none in between. That's what our fathers called the order salutis.

That's it, that's the order thing. Whom he did predestinate, one, then he called, two, whom he called, he justified, three, and whom he justified, he glorified, and he lost nobody in between. And so the rest of the chapter you're familiar with.

But that's the scripture I want to use to buttress the doctrinal statement. Now, the illustration that I want to give to buttress that is found in John chapter 10. John chapter 10, where our Lord is speaking of being the shepherd of the sheep.

And I want to read from verse 26-29. This is an illustration by our Lord of the doctrine that I just stated and read from the scriptures. But ye believe not.

Well, why don't you believe? Because ye are not my sheep, I said unto you, my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and I give unto them, I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my hand. I and my Father are one.

Now, there's three ways to read this passage. You know, some people look at verse 27 and 28 and they'd like to read it like this. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and if they follow me, but there's no... And some people just think they must put an if in there.

But there's no if there. And then there's others who read it, the heresy of the antinomian teaching of eternal security. They read it like this.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never, never, never, never, never, never perish. And that's all they see, never perish. But if you read your Bible or write, you read it like this.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them, and they... Well, why is it that we are kept and preserved for his eternal kingdom if we're his sheep? Let me offer three reasons. Why is this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints true? First, because of God Almighty's immutable, unchanging purpose. And that's expressed in John chapter 6, verse 38 to 40.

It's true because of God's immutable, unchanging purpose. Notice that as it's set out so beautifully in John chapter 6, verse 38 to 40. Jesus, I come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me.

And this is the will of Him that sent me, that all which He has given me, there's the purpose. I shall lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. There's the purpose.

The will of the Father. There it is in verse 39. It's the will of the Father.

And of course, God gave His Son some sheep. Now, you don't know who they are, and I don't know who they are, and He sent us out on the side of the hill to call on whosoever will may come. I don't know their, but they're out on the side of the hill, and we got to find them, and find them, and call them.

But He has a purpose. He gave His Son, and that's one of the reasons that this great doctrine is true. Because of the Father's immutable, unchanging purpose.

The second reason it's true is because of Christ's purchase and His prayer. You see, and maybe we better look a little bit at His prayer, and speak a little bit of His purpose. Look at His prayer in John chapter 17.

You see, this is why these great doctrines are true. His prayer is in John chapter 17, verse 2. And thou hast given Him power, Our Lord's taking us into His own prayer closet now. As thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him.

Where is eternal life? It's in the hands of a sovereign Christ. It's not at the end of some accepted proposition. It's in the hands of a sovereign Christ.

And if men and women in this world would believe that, they would either curse God, or they would become beggars in His sight. If eternal life is in His hands, they'd either hate that, or become beggars in His sight. Notice His prayer.

Verse 9, I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given Me, said Jesus, for they are Thine. His prayer, verse 15, I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but thou shouldst keep them from evil. It's true because of His prayer.

But it's also true because of His purchase. Christ's work is a finished work, I learned from this same chapter. I glorify Thee on the earth, I have finished the work.

Finished the work that thou hast given Me to do. You see, Christ's work is a finished work. He's not a frustrated worker.

He's not a frustrated worker. He's a finished worker. And I love that passage in Isaiah, probably the most Christological passage in all the Bible.

Isaiah chapter 53, and when I come to that verse, He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Not be disappointed. Not that He may not see the travail of His soul, but He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

You see, the doctrine of perseverance is true because of His purchase. Christ not only prayed for some sheep, He purchased them before He prayed for them. So it's true because of that.

He has a church, a people. In the Bible that's referred to, that church is referred to sometimes as a body of Christ. Sometimes it's referred to as a bride of Christ.

Other times it's talked about a building. I think it was in that passage this morning. Now, if it's a body, it's not a frail body.

It's a glorious body. I love the title of R.B. Kuyper's book on the church. The Glorious Body of Christ.

It's a glorious body. Nor is it a falling half-built building. It's a complete building.

And every stone that's out in the rubble sheets of sin and despair today, every stone that belongs in that building will be there. It's not a feeble bride, peg-legged, one-eyed or something like that. No, it's a beautiful bride.

A beautiful bride. And the reason this great doctrine is true is not only because of God's immutable purpose, unchangeable purpose, but it's true because of Christ's purchase and Christ's prayer. Don't you love that when you see Peter so far out of line and you hear our Lord say, Simon, Simon, Satan has desired thee to sift his wheat, but I have prayed for thee if thy faith fail not.

I don't know how long you've been on the way, but I've been on the way long enough to pillow my head on that great truth more than once. When I didn't pray for myself, Christ prayed for me. We're kept because of his prayer.

We're kept because of his purchase. And then we're kept for a third reason. His sheep are kept and preserved because of the indwelling Spirit and the sealing of the Spirit.

And you find that, to buttress that, in Ephesians 1.13. After ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Ephesians 4.13. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. And brother, what God seals is sealed.

It's sealed. Well, let me say then, it's true because of the work of the triune God. It's true because of what the Father planned and purposed in lection.

It's true because of the Son's purchase in prayer. It's true because of the Spirit's presence. And indwelling, now listen, I want you to get a point.

Some of you might be stumbling on this today. But there is not war in the Trinity. The Father didn't plan one thing, and the Son purchased something else, and the Spirit applies something else.

There is no war in the Trinity. No war in the Trinity. What the Father planned, the Son purchased, and the Spirit applied.

Now that will bring you to another doctrine. That's not my subject. But it's there nevertheless.

No, no. The working of the triune God. Now notice very carefully how I made my first statement.

I didn't say all professors. I didn't say all who walk hours. I didn't say all who were baptized.

I didn't say all who were catechized. I said all those who are savingly joined to Jesus Christ are kept and preserved for His eternal kingdom. And these are marked by two basic evidences.

These are marked by two basic evidences. One of them is repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And that's conversion.

Those two things equal conversion. Not one of them. Not just trust Jesus, trust Jesus, trust Jesus.

I didn't say that. I said these who I've described are marked by two basic evidences. Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

And what we must remember in our generation as we think of these people and our relatives, some of them, and our friends that we love very dearly, the ones I described at first, many times who've made an incredible profession, we must remember many things. But one of the things we must remember is that the Bible speaks of temporary believers. If you pull down Hodges Theology or any of those great theologians, under faith you'll have a whole section of historical faith, which is not saving, and some of them have three or four different kinds of faith that the theologians describe.

So there is a faith that's not saving faith. They're temporary believers. You find it in Luke 8.13. They believe for a while.

Well, how long's that? I don't know. Might be a week. I've seen some of them never come back to church.

Might be a month, it might be ten years. They believe for a while, but in the time of temptation they fall away. So in this whole subject and what some of our antinomian friends do, who have an antinomian view of this doctrine, what they seem to miss, or one of the things they miss is that they forget that there is such a thing as head faith.

What's that? Well, that's nothing more than giving intellectual assent to certain historical facts. You can learn the things of the faith like you learn the Gettysburg Address. I forgot I'm in the South.

Like you can learn the George Washington Cross to Delaware. Or any other thing. You can learn the things of the faith that way.

The same way. Just intellectual assent to certain historical facts. And there's devil's faith.

What's that? Well, that's religious appropriation of the facts. And then the Bible speaks of dead faith. That's the religious appropriation of the facts.

The devil's faith is a little better. Because the devil's faith, they have a pretty good, the demons have a pretty good confession. You ever look at the demons' confession? Well, let me tell you where their confession is.

They have a confession of faith. It's found in Matthew chapter 8, verse 29. If you want to know the demons' confession, it says this.

The demons said this. What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come to torment us before the time? Now, that's a pretty good confession. They were straight on the person of Christ.

He's the Son of God. They were straight on the power of Christ. He had power to torment them.

Well, they were even straight on prophecy. They said, Art thou come to torment us before the time? So they knew the time. That's pretty straight.

That's straighter than I am. But note well, the Bible is clear. Therefore, on who are kept and preserved for his eternal kingdom? It's those who are savingly joined.

Well, now for the second statement. I think you're all rocking pretty well on that. I don't see anybody walking out on that.

But you better hold tight now. Tighten your seatbelts. Because I'm going to get in the other half of it.

Only those who persevere in holiness and obedience unto the end have any reason to believe that they are part of this eternal kingdom and preserved by him. See, that's the other side of my text. They will not depart from me.

They will not depart from me. Let me give you an illustration. You know, when I was in the Navy, I'd just become a Christian.

Right before I went in the Navy, about six months or something like that. And I didn't know anything about doctrine. But I knew the Lord had done something in my heart.

And we went out in the South Pacific not too long after that. And there was a fellow there, and his name was Dozer. And he'd come from a Christian home, and he knew the hymns, and he could really sing, and he was a wonderful fellow.

Everybody loved him. And he'd come to the prayer meeting out in the South Pacific. But when we'd get back to shore, pick up some more Marines or something, without a doubt, every time without exception, he was off drunk, wine, women, and song.

And you know, I didn't understand this. I really couldn't understand it. And I liked him so much.

And so one night we had gone back out in the South Pacific. And it was a calm night, and the moon was shining, and you could look and see the wake of the ship for miles. And he was standing back at what we called the fantail.

And he was looking back at the wake. And I went up and put my arm around him, and I said, Dozer, I said, you know, I really like you. And I said, you seem to know a lot more about things than I do.

I said, I'd like to talk to you. I said, how is it that you're with us out here, and say you're a Christian, and as soon as we get back to shore, you're off and drunk, and they carry you back to ship drunk every night? And I'll never forget his statement. He said, my daddy's a Baptist preacher.

And he told me, once you're saved, you're always saved. And something in me just started to quiver. I said, well, I don't know your daddy.

And I said, I didn't know the difference between internal security and social security. And I didn't know much. But I said, Dozer, I don't know your daddy, but I've got a Bible, and I've found this, that no drunkard shall enter the kingdom of God.

No adulterer shall enter the kingdom of God. See, his daddy didn't give him the advice that David gave Solomon when he was about to die. And Solomon was about to go out of this world in the first chronicles, and if Solomon wasn't a covenant child, there never was one.

David called Solomon, and he said this in 1 Chronicles 28.9, And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind. For the Lord searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever.

If thou forsake him, he'll cast thee off forever. You see, that's a death blow to antinomianism. Now, I want to give you some other New Testament passages.

I'll let you deal with the passages on your own. But I just want to buttress this statement. And I hope you won't forget Professor Murray's statement that I began with.

How dangerous it is to have one half-truth. Matthew chapter 24, verse 10 to 13. And then shall many be offended.

They shall betray one another. They shall hate one another. Many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many.

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. He that shall endure to the end.

Turn quickly to John chapter 8, where our Lord defines a disciple. In fact, it is the best definition of a disciple you'll find in all the New Testament, because it's our Lord's definition of a disciple. John chapter 8, verse 32.

30 to 32. As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If, now don't you take the ifs out.

You know, some people would like to put ifs in the Bible at places, and other people would like to take them out. Don't take it out. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If you continue in my word, then are you my disciple indeed.

That's a definition. That's our Lord's definition of a disciple. And then we have that passage in John 15, verses 1 to 6, where our Lord uses a parable of the dead and fruitless branches.

And he said God does with professors, fruitless professors, as he does with dead branches. Then we have in Matthew chapter 25, the parable of the ten virgins. They all had the lamp of profession.

They all had the lamp of profession. But Jesus had to say to half of them, and I quote our Lord, I never knew you. I never knew you.

We have those last words to the churches in Revelation. And in every case, as far as I know, chapter 2, verse 2-7. In chapter 3, we have it in verse 7. We have it in verse 11.

We have it in verse 17. We have it in verse 26 of the second chapter. Every church, it ends like this.

Chapter 3, verse 5. Chapter 3, verse 12. Chapter 3, verse 21. He that overcometh.

He that overcometh. Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 3, verse 14. Hebrews chapter 3, verse 14.

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence unto the end. When my son went off to college, he had been raised in a Christian home. And he gave a profession.

Hadn't caused us any serious troubles. But you know, when boys and girls go off to college, a lot of times, that's the end of their home life because they find somebody they love and they get married. And it was kind of a sad day for me because I figured that's what would happen.

And so it did. But before he went off, I thought it would be good if we went off to some place, to a nice resort and played a little golf and talked a little bit. And I wanted to talk to him spiritually, but I didn't want to preach to him.

So we took a couple good tapes of sermons of somebody. Played golf, went to Hershey, Pennsylvania. And I said, let's read the book of Hebrews together.

I said, I promise you I won't make one comment. I said, but I want you to do one thing. I want you to take a pencil, a thick pencil.

And I want you to underline one word as we read. That's all. Now we actually did this.

I want you to underline one word. He says, what's the word, Dad? I said, the word if. And these are the kind of verses that he underlined.

If you hold fast the beginning of your conscience, steadfast to the end. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 36 to 38. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come. And not tarry, now the just shall live by faith. But if any man, if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure.

Look at it in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. That little word if again. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, the first four verses, particularly verses 2 and 3. Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel, which I preach unto you, which also I have received, wherein ye stand.

By which also ye are saved, if you keep in memory. And if you have another translation, which I think in this case is a better translation, it would say this. By which also you are saved, if you hold fast.

How many have hold fast? Hold fast. By which also you are saved, if you hold fast, is what I have preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain. Now you see, this ought to put a death blow to all this shallow, easy, believism, as we've come to call it.

Look at Colossians chapter 1. I told you I want to buttress this with Scripture. Look at Colossians chapter 1, verse 21 to 23. Incidentally, this is one of the passages Professor Murray used in conjunction with the statement that I read to you at the outset.

Chapter 1, verse 21 to 23. And you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death to present you holy, unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight, if grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven. And wherefore I, Paul, am made a minister.

Now you see, that would eliminate the antinomian teaching of eternal security. You see, the expression, as I pointed out a moment ago, the expression eternal security does not appear, at least in the English Bible. But there is an expression that's very close to it.

Very close to it. And that is eternal salvation. And I only know of one place where that's used in the Bible, and it's used in Hebrews chapter 5, verse 8 and 9. May I read it for you? Here's the expression that's very close to eternal security.

Speaking of our Lord. Though he were a son, yet learned the obedience by the things that he suffered, and being made perfect, he became the author of what, class? Eternal salvation. Unto whom, class? You see, I will not depart from them, and they shall not depart from me.

That's not talking about two different groups. That's the same crowd. That's the same crowd.

You see, it's a gospel of behavior, as well as a gospel of belief. Now, it's very important how you tie that knot, because you'll be having salvation by works if you tie it one way. You'll be keeping yourself if you tie it another way.

It's very important. I say it's a gospel of behavior. And when we read that sobering passage in Paul's epistle, where he said, and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and them that obey not the gospel, obey not the gospel, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction.

Well, somebody said, you know, you're having a contradiction here. No, no contradiction. They shall not depart from me, said my text, Jeremiah 32, 40.

I shall not depart from them. They shall not depart from me. It's the same crowd.

No contradiction. But you see, there's a great danger in giving a half-truth for a whole truth. I was speaking at Harvey Cedars, the illustrator.

I was speaking at Harvey Cedars, New Jersey, some years ago. And I don't remember, I think I was talking about the law of God, maybe at that time. But I know I was no more finished the first night I was going to be there a week, and a young girl, about 18 years old, came to the front.

And she said to me, Mr. Reichlinger, she says, I assume you do not believe in eternal security. Really? I said, well, first of all, I want to know what that is. You know, I used to, people used to say to me, are you a Calvinist? And after I became a Calvinist, you know, I wanted to jump up in both feet and say yes.

Well, I found, I made a great discovery that I was saying yes to their definition. And anymore, after I made that tremendous discovery, anymore anybody asks me if I'm a Calvinist, I say, you tell me what that is. And when they do, I say, no, sorry, I'm not that.

So the girl said to me, I assume you don't believe in eternal security. I said, well, you tell me what it is, and then I'll tell you. Is it in the Bible? She said, yeah, my father's a missionary, and he, he, he said, it must be, because that's what he taught us.

I said, well, where is it in the Bible? She stumbled around. I said, maybe I could help you a little bit. I said, does it sound like this? My sheep hear my voice.

Oh, she said, that's it. I said, all right, you just sit down here a minute on the front bench. You sit down.

I said, now, you take your Bible, and I said, let's look at that, what your father taught you. Because I said, I'm not going to teach you anything different than what your father taught you. I don't believe.

Maybe you'll understand it a little different. And I'm not sure what he taught you, but I'll, I'll use the same verses at least that he did. So she turned, and we turned in our Bible.

She had her Bible. And I said, now, you read carefully with me. And we read these verses.

My sheep hear my voice. I know them. They follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.

I said to her, I said, let's look first at the characteristic of a sheep, and then let's, and then let's consider the promise to the sheep. I said, there are two very distinct characteristics of a sheep. My sheep hear my voice.

What's that? Well, that's an open ear. Well, what's that? That's a disposition of heart to know the will of God. My sheep hear my voice.

That's a disposition of heart to know the will of God. And the text says, they follow me. Well, what's that? That's an obedient foot.

And what's that? That's a disposition of heart to do the will of God. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them. I said, honey, I said, I'll not have any questions about what God's going to do with the sheep.

But I said, we should never exclude the clear, distinct description that God gives us of the sheep. And there are two very distinct descriptions that our Lord Jesus Christ gives us of the sheep. And one is, a disposition to know His will.

My sheep hear my voice. A disposition to do the will of God. They follow me.

And then the promise is, to these kind of people, these kind of sheep, I give unto them. Who? Those who have a disposition to hear my voice. Those who have a disposition to follow me.

You see, my dear, those blessed old doctrines that we love, many times are so rested and strained, we separate. You know, most of my Antinomian friends and my Arminian friends too, they want to deny God's sovereignty in salvation. It's all responsibility.

What you're going to do with Jesus. What you're going to do with Jesus. And many times, they deny God's sovereignty in initially coming to Christ.

And the Antinomians then, deny human responsibility after they've come to Christ. And as we cannot perfectly put sovereignty and responsibility together in our preaching and application of inviting sinners to Christ, maybe we can't put perseverance of the saints and the preservation of the Savior together in the believer as well. Maybe it's what my dear friend Dr. Packer calls an antinomy.

But it's both in the Bible and we must preach responsibility for sinners to come. We must preach God's sovereignty in drawing them and awakening them and effectually calling them without any equivocation. Because it's in the Bible.

Well, let me sum up what I said and say a few words. Because there's something, one other thing that needs to be said before I stop. Let me sum up.

What was my first statement? All those who are savingly joined to Jesus Christ, I want you to get that expression, are kept and preserved for His eternal kingdom because of the Father's immutable purpose in election, an unchangeable purpose, because of the Son's purchase in prayer, because of the Spirit's healing and indwelling. Who are they? Those who persevere until the end. I will not turn away from them and they shall not depart from me.

You know, let me just say one word of warning right here. A great word of warning. That is why when somebody's away from God, some of these people that are, we call them backslidden, I'll mention it in a minute.

We should not say, oh, they were saved, but now they're out in the world. But on the other hand, we shouldn't say, oh no, they're not Christian. Some things you better leave with God.

You better leave with God. Oh yes, I learned from the Bible where John the Baptist was speaking of Jesus and he said, whose fan is in his hand, he will thoroughly purge his floor and gather the wheat into the garden, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. But that's Jesus.

And let me tell you something. The Bible teaches there will be a separation. The Bible teaches us it is not now.

And the Bible teaches us that the winnowing fan is not in our hand. So these people that have made professions whether they seem credible or you don't know, some things you better leave with God. But we must hold to these truths.

We must hold to those two truths. Not only are they kept and preserved, but also only those who persevere in holiness and obedience have any reason to believe that they're part of God's eternal kingdom. You see, the promises of persevering, or let me say it this way, the promise of the preserving of the Savior is for those who hear his voice and follow him.

There's no promise for men living in sin except forgiveness to return. There's no assurance for Peter when he's denying the Lord. There's no assurance for David when he's living in adultery with Bathsheba.

That's why we have his prayer in the 51st Psalm, the 12th and 13th verse. He's praying to have resurances restored. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.

I believe that we've done great harm in our generation to a lot of young people because we have not made clear the distinction between falling and stumbling, which all saints know something about. All of you here today know something about stumbling and falling and making crooked steps in your way to glory. The great danger is not making a distinction between stumbling and falling and the continual, habitual, persistent bent of the life to sin.

That's two different things. Let me put it another way. Making a distinction, therefore, between reigning sin and remaining sin.

A Christian is someone who's changed kingdoms. He's under the kingdom and the dominion of our Lord. He's changed kingdoms.

Those who do not humbly reverence the duty to the will of God revealed in the Holy Scriptures have no warrant to believe that they're born again. Well, somebody said to me, what about backsliding? You act

like you don't believe in this backsliding. Yes, I do.

I sure do. I'll even tell you how it comes about. It comes about through the temptations of Satan in the world.

It comes about because of the prevalence of the corruption remaining in us even as Christians. It comes about because we neglect the means of our preservation, which is the word and prayer and the assembling of ourselves together. It comes about by sometimes falling into some grievous sin.

Yes, I believe in it. And I believe it has some terrible, grievous results. And what are they? The loss of assurance.

Secondly, I believe that that incurs God's displeasure on our life. Another result I learned from the Bible, it's we grieve the Spirit. The third is we're deprived of comfort and joy in a backslidden condition.

And then there's the heart hardened. And then there's the conscience wounded. And it's an awful thing to live with a wounded conscience.

And another result, and this is a sad and painful result, we hurt and scandalize God's people. I want to close by reminding you just of that particular thing. I say we hurt and scandalize others.

If you have your Bible, would you turn to 2 Samuel chapter 24? Or chapter 12, rather. 2 Samuel chapter 12. And here we have David's awful sin.

The chapter that contains that. And when Nathan the prophet came to him to tell him about it, one of the things that Nathan said is in verse 14. Let me read verse 13.

I said backsliding scandalizes others. And David said to Nathan, I've sinned against the Lord. David said, I've sinned against the Lord.

This is after he was brought face to face where he sinned. And Nathan said to David, the Lord also has put away thy sin. Thou shalt not die.

Nevertheless, or how be it, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion of the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. We scandalize others. A Christian in a backslidden condition does great harm to the cause of Christ as he scandalizes others.

Well, perseverance, yes. All those who are savingly joined to Jesus Christ are kept and preserved. And I don't want you to miss it.

Because of the Father's immutable, unchangeable purpose. Because of Christ's purchase and his prayer. Because of the Spirit's sealing and indwelling.

That's why it's true. Only those who persevere in holiness and obedience unto the end have any reason to believe that they are part of that kingdom. Without holiness, no man shall.

Our Father, we thank you for the revelation of thyself in nature that leaves men without excuse. We thank you for the revelation of thy words in the prophets. We thank you for the further revelation of thy words in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ that reveals thy love and mercy to us.

Oh, make us hungry for truth. Give us that disposition of heart to be open to all thy truth. We thank you for this conference.

We thank you for our fellow laborers who are gathered here to open the word. We thank you that even as preachers we need preach to. And we pray that you'd speak to each one of us according to our needs.

That we may be good shepherds of your flock. We pray that you'd increase our compassion for lost sinners. Make us more like our Savior, Father, in his love for thee and for thy law.

Make us more like him as he had compassion for men. Oh God, our Father, make us more like him in purity of heart. Lord, by thy Spirit, make us more like him in true humility.

We plead it for his namesake. And our Father, should those have come to these meetings who are strangers to your grace and strangers to your mercy, we pray that it would please thee this week to open the eyes of their understanding, to open their hearts. Reveal Christ our Lord and King to them by thy word and Spirit.

Accept our thanks for the sweet Spirit that's prevailed among us these days and bless and sanctify our hours together as the conference goes on. Hear our prayers of praise as we cry out the desires of our hearts. Hear our cries for those things which are according to your will and word.

Hear our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord and our Savior. Amen.

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