

Sermon to the Saints of God which are at Topeka – Sunday, August 30, 2015

A sermon on the sin and preservation of the saints

In an earlier sermon, I spoke of the notion that there is war – and bitter enmity – that courses through the minds and hearts of God’s people – that being the constant battle between the flesh and the spirit. That God’s elect alone are granted a capacity for spiritual reasoning, and we are granted a capacity to sow to the spirit, whereas the unregenerate man has been granted no such capacity, and he is therefore stuck with worldly or fleshly reasoning and gratifications, and can no way sow unto the spirit. There is no war in that man – there is only the flesh. But in us, there is that constant war, being blessed with the capacity to be ashamed of one’s sin and to reason spiritually, and to strive against sin when one is looking at things aright.

However, in every one of God’s elect there remains the liability to sin. When a man is born of water and of the Spirit, it is neither the elimination nor the transformation of the old, carnal nature, but is the impartation or giving of a new nature, a spiritual nature, the Divine nature. In every born again person there are two natures—the old and the new—the flesh and the spirit—which are contrary in disposition, continually warring against each other. The old, carnal nature remains in the believer as long as he continues in this body, and therefore there is always a possibility of him sinning. And while this is true, God’s elect are not responsible for the ultimate penalty for sin: hell - the death of Christ annulled it. The blood of the Lamb has freed us from the dominion of sin. Once we were its slaves (as unregenerate men have no other nature but the flesh), but now it has no monopoly over us. But the Word of God forbids it in us:

“Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.” - 1Co 15:34).

“As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” - 1Pe 1:15

The indwelling Holy Spirit condemns it in us. Our bodies are His temples, and we are duty bound to exclude everything which would in anywise defile them. There is no legitimate excuse for the indulgence of it. But the fact remains that all believers do sin.

“For there is not a just man on earth that doeth good, and sinneth not.” – Ec. 7:20

Every believer sins every day of his life, both negatively (in not doing what God requires of him) and positively (in doing what God has prohibited).

“The thought of foolishness is sin.” - Pro 24:9.

Many of our sins are merely the operations of our mind – how we think about things. Anxiety and worry are sinful, because forbidden by the Scripture. Covetousness is sinful, pride is sinful, sloth is sinful, and none of us can plead innocence.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” - 1Jo 1:8

And while it is true that all of God's elect sin, daily, in that we fail to measure up to the standard of holiness revealed in God's Word and we fail to perfectly follow the "example" left us by the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a fundamental difference in our failure and the failure of the unbeliever. The unbeliever is "*the servant (or slave) of sin*" (John 8:34), but the believer has been "made free" — or delivered from the power of sin:

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." – John 8:36.

Also, we read:

"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil." - 1Jo 3:6-8

This does not teach that the daily walk of a believer is sinless, but it teaches that God's elect will not *practice* sin. The word '*practice*' implies that someone will do it repeatedly, with an eye toward becoming more and more proficient at it – think 'practice makes perfect' or think of a 'practitioner.' "*He that committeth sin*" — or, commits and continues committing is the force of the word: he that makes a regular practice of committing sin (and delighting in it). The verse means he that sins and goes on sinning is of the devil, not he that sins. It is the same sense in which the verse "*he that doeth (practices) righteousness is righteous*" is meant. The Holy Spirit, through Paul, is referring to the general course and tenor of our lives. He is speaking of that which is our habit. A true Christian's life, summed up as a whole *after* being called may have, like David, his ox veer into the ditch on occasion, yet God will make a way for him to escape. Like Peter he may fail in the hour of testing, who denied Christ thrice before the cock crowed, yet the Christian shall repent of his failure.

Clearly stated, if you love sin you are no child of God, for God is holy. If you are living to please yourself and you enjoy the pleasures of sin, you are no Christian. A Christian, in the main, denies himself, takes up his cross and follows Christ (which, Lord willing, will be the main topic of my next sermon); a Christian is one who is subject to the lordship of Christ, and no man can serve two masters. If when you give into temptation you are not cut to the heart afterward, if the fact that you have offended against the Lord God is not followed by genuine contrition and repentance, it is proof you have never been born again; for when a real believer sins he "grieves" the Spirit within him, and the Spirit will cause him to grieve over his wrong-doing.

But what of the one, who genuinely is God's elect, and who is "*overtaken in a fault*" (Gal 6:1)? What of the one who daily tries with his might to please God and glorify Christ, who actually, in the main, seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Mat 6:33), but who is aware that he offends in many things (Jam 3:2)? What are the consequences of such sins in the believer? He does not cease to be God's child. A child of God is one who has been begotten by the Holy Spirit and made a partaker of the divine nature. Being born again is much more than an external reformation, it is an internal regeneration – a new nature is imparted on the soul. The new birth does not mean turning over a new leaf, but is the beginning of a new life. And one who has truly been born again cannot be unborn. We have been born again of "*incorruptible seed*" (1Pe 1:23). Can that which is incorruptible die? No. Can those who have been spiritually resurrected be utterly and eternally destroyed? No.

"I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it that men should fear before him." – Ec. 3:14

When the believer sins he does not forfeit eternal life, and why? Because it is a gift—a free gift from God.

For the wages of sin is death; but the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. – Rom. 6:23

The believer did nothing and in fact could do nothing to merit this gift (if he could, it would be an earned reward) – so by the same token, he can do nothing to un-earn it. The gift that God gives the believer is eternal life. Eternal life: totally unearned. God gave to Adam a probationary life: it was his so long as he obeyed God’s command and refused to eat of the forbidden fruit. God gave to Israel in Canaan a conditional life: their inhabiting that land was made contingent upon their keeping of the commandments and their abstaining from idolatry. But to the believer in Christ, God does not give probationary nor a conditional life, but eternal life. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” – Rom. 11:29

Which is to say that they are immutable and unalterable – God never revokes them. To say that eternal life may end is a contradiction in terms. The believer does not lose the Holy Spirit. David prayed, *“Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.” (Psa 51:11)*, but this was under the dispensation of law. By contrast, under the dispensation of grace, the promise of the Saviour is:

“And he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.” - John 14:16

The born again man may and does “grieve” the Holy Spirit, but he cannot drive Him away. And for this reason, the Holy Spirit takes up His abode in the believer not on account of any personal fitness He finds in him, but grounded in the finished work of Christ, and there is nothing can disrupt that. Consider the scripture:

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” – Eph. 4:30

The believer is sealed, that is, until the day when we shall be glorified in spirit, and soul, and body. A striking example of this fact is seen in the case of the church at Corinth. This was a church of novices – having recently emerged from an idolatrous and licentious heathendom, and at the time that the Holy Spirit of God penned 1 Corinthians at the hand of Paul, they were guilty of some pretty awful sins. They encouraged and held schisms - brother went to law against brother; and what was worse, some had profaned the table of the Lord, having turned the supper into a drunken revel. And yet to this very church, while admonishing the same, the Lord says through Paul:

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” - 1Co 3:16

In spite of their sins, the saints at Corinth had not lost the Holy Spirit – they had not become fundamentally unfit for heaven. The moment the Lord gives us that grace of belief, we are fitted and qualified to enter the presence of the most high God:

“Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet (appropriate, fitting) to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” - Col 1:12

This fitness is not of ourselves, but in Christ. Therefore this fitness is perfect and unalterable:

“For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” - Heb 10:14

Our fitness for heaven does not depend on our service, our works, our obedience, or our faithfulness, but solely upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus for us. Paul was as much ready for heaven the moment he was born again as he was at the close of his life of devoted allegiance to his King. The saints who John saw in the heavenly temple of the God had robes that had been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. It is the precious blood, and that alone, which gives us a deed to a heavenly mansion. We partake of the incorruptible inheritance only through grace, and so our personal unworthiness cannot make us unfit for it. If sinning made a once fit believer unfit for heaven, then none would ever get there:

“For in many things we offend all...” - Jam 3:2

With this said, a man may not live as he pleases, live a life of open sin, and console himself that when he dies he will go to heaven – perverting the sound scriptural reasoning just offered up. If you are a child of God your daily walk will show evidence of it. If you are really a Christian your life will demonstrate it, and if your life does not so demonstrate it, apart from your ox veering into the ditch on occasion, then you are not a Christian. If you are one of His “sheep,” you will follow the Shepherd, not the “desires of the flesh” or the ways of the world. You will “hear” (and not ignore or disregard) Christ’s voice, and you will not eternally perish - no saint of God through sinning can finally be lost. Backslide, yes – utterly perish, no. No backsliding saint of God ever perished. Noah was a backslider—he became intoxicated. Abraham was a backslider—he went down to Egypt in unbelief, and while there told a lie. Jacob was a backslider—he deliberately deceived his father. Moses was a backslider—in his anger, he disobeyed God. David was a backslider—he committed adultery and murder. Peter was a backslider—he denied his Lord. But not one of them perished. Each of them was able to say: *“He restoreth my soul” (Psa. 23:3)*. Yes - they were “restored.” They did not continue in their wickedness: they repented and turned to God.

There are those who teach and believe that it is possible for a born again person to be eternally lost. But the eternal security of the believer is something more than a just a theological difference of opinion, it is a vital part of the saints. The final preservation of the saints is something more than a subject for religious debate, it is a divinely revealed truth for the establishing, keeping and perfecting of the heart in grace. What we are now contending for is something way more than a bullet point of Calvinism, it is that which is bound up with the honor of God, the efficacy of the blood of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Here are some of the erroneous evils which are involved in the denial of this truth.

If, through sinning, a believer perished, then the promises of God would be valueless. Again and again God has promised in His Word that whosoever believeth in His Son shall not perish but have everlasting life. If then I have believed in the Lord Jesus and yet should perish, then what? Consider the scripture:

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” -John 6:37)

Christ is here declaring that He never expels, or casts out, any sinner whom He has received.

“And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” - John 6:39

If then the Father has given me to Christ, and in consequence I have “come” to Him, and He has promised that He will “in no wise” (under no circumstances) “cast me out” and that He will “lose nothing” of the “all” which the Father has given Him, and yet I should be eternally lost—then what would the value of that promise be?

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will finish it until the day of Jesus Christ.” - Phi 1:6

If God has begun a good work in me and that work is not “finished” and in consequence I am lost—then what? It is unsound doctrine to say that God is willing to do His part providing I do mine: that God is hindered from finishing His work through my sinful conduct. It is a denial of God’s sovereignty. If then God has promised to do this and He fails to fulfill it—then what? We reply, then, in such a case, God’s Word would be like fallen man’s—unreliable and untrustworthy; and, in such an event, we should no longer have any sure foundation for our faith or anchor for our souls. But, let God be true and every man a liar. If, through sinning, a believer finally and eternally perished—What? Then the whole plan of salvation would be overthrown. If, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, my going to heaven is contingent upon my continued faithfulness and obedience (instead of my faithfulness and obedience being rendered out of love and gratitude because Christ has *already* saved me); if through my failure to remain faithful and obedient I am eternally lost, then my salvation is dependent upon my works, which flatly contradicts scripture:

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” – Titus 3:5

Further; if my ultimate salvation is determined by my obedience and faithfulness then I earn and merit it, and therefore, salvation is a prize that I have won, not by lot, but by behavior. This is an obvious contradiction to scripture:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” - Eph. 2:8-9

And if a man’s salvation is due in part to his obedience and good works, and heaven is a reward for his diligence, then God is robbed of at least a part of His glory, for in that case none would cry:

“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.” – Psa. 115:1

And if my salvation turns upon me holding out faithful to the end and if through failure to do so I should be lost, then I cannot know for certain whether I shall spend eternity in heaven or hell until I come to die – and how then could I now *“rejoice because my name is written in heaven?”* (Luk 10:20) Salvation would always have to be a future prospect instead of a matter of great present rejoicing. God’s elect do not produce the fruit of the Spirit and bring forth good works in order to be saved, but they do them because they are saved. Rightly dividing the word of truth yields full consciousness of the fact that we are unable to save ourselves – it is solely a question of God’s power. It is true that the world, the flesh, and the devil, are set in array against us; but God is for us, and *“If God be for us, who can be against us”* (Rom 8:31)?

Noah was warned of God that a flood would be sent to destroy the wicked. An ark was provided as a shelter from the coming of divine judgment. Into this ark Noah and his family entered. Having entered that ark the responsibility of their preservation was upon God Himself. Noah could not leave the ark for *“the Lord shut him in” (Gen 7:16)*. The fountains of the great deep were broken, the windows of heaven were opened and the rain descended—was the Lord able to preserve those in the ark? It was solely a matter of His power. It wasn’t Noah’s building skill, for God even gave him that design. In like manner every believer has *“fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb 6:18)* and it is now a question of God’s power to keep—Is He able? Consider the scripture:

“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” - 2Ti 1:12

If you deny the eternal security of the believer, then you limit the keeping power of God. Teach that it is possible for one to be lost who has previously committed his soul into the hands of the Lord, and you deny the omnipotence of the Most High, and the intercession of Christ would not be effectual. Not only did the Lord Jesus Christ die on the Cross for his sheep, but He now lives to make intercession for those who have fled to Him for refuge. After stating that *“He [God] is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Christ); the reason for this is given in the words that follow—“seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25)*

“It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” – Rom. 8:34

And we know that the intercession Christ makes on behalf of the elect is effectual. Christ speaks definitively to this himself when He said:

“Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I know that thou hearest me always” (Joh 11:41-42). Knowing that Satan desired to have Peter and that he might sift him as wheat, He said to Peter, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” – Lu. 22:32

And if the *“effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jam 5:16)*, who can estimate the value of the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ himself? When someone believes or declares that through sinning a believer may perish, then they discredit the sure advocacy of our blessed Mediator. Teach that it is possible for a saint of God to apostatize and you contradict the plain testimony of Scripture. If, through sinning, a believer perished—What? Then the assurance of a perfect salvation based upon the promises of God becomes impossible. In such a case the believer in Christ must live in daily fear lest he fail to render unto God the required obedience. No longer can he say:

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” – Rom. 8:28,

because he then doesn’t know whether or not he may commit some sin which shall cause all things to work together for his everlasting destruction. He is unable to say:

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature (including Satan) shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” - Rom. 8:38-39,

because some unfaithfulness on his part may separate him. He is robbed of all present peace and sense of security, and is in bondage to a servile fear. And that’s not what the scriptures teach about salvation.

But what of the believer’s responsibility - irresponsible teaching of the locked in assurance of salvation might encourage sin, or encourage loose living, and be in great danger of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. What then are the consequences when God’s elect sin, if that soul never loses eternal salvation to sin? His communion with God is broken. The first consequence of Adam’s sin was a breaking of his fellowship with the Lord. When in the cool of the day the Lord walked through the Garden, Adam sought to flee from His presence by hiding away among the trees. His conscience convicted him; he had no longer any relish for spiritual things; communion was broken. Such is always the case. How can two walk together except they be agreed? God cannot tolerate the indulgence of known sin. Once sin is allowed a comfortable place in the life, fellowship with God becomes impossible. Think of an overcast week - sometimes for days together the clouds will come in between and hide the sun from the earth. It is no longer visible: its full warmth is no longer enjoyed, though its position in relation to the earth remains the same. When the clouds dissipate, then the warmth and brightness are enjoyed again. In like manner, the sins of the believer come in between his soul and God, until the smile of His countenance is hidden, and His perfections are no longer enjoyed. Yet His relation to the believer remains unchanged. But it is not until he confesses and forsakes these sins that the cloud is removed and communion is restored. And this interruption of divine communion is not a light matter. It is deeply serious. Not only does it mean the loss of peace and joy and the cessation of any further spiritual growth, but what is infinitely sadder, it grieves the Saviour. What He desires almost above everything else is fellowship with His own blood-bought people. One of the most pathetic pictures presented in the Bible is that found in Revelation 3:20—“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” It is not here a question of salvation but of communion. “Supping” is always the symbol and expression of fellowship. It is not the eating, but the communion:

“And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” – Luke 22:15

Christ wasn’t looking forward to the cooking – it was the communion with those who the Father had given Him. One of the results of David’s terrible fall was the loss of his joy of God’s salvation: *“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation” (Psa 51:12)*, was his heart-felt, heart-broken cry. He does not say, “Restore unto me thy salvation,” but “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.” By his wicked conduct he had lost the enjoyment of it. In proportion that the believer allows sin a place in his daily life, he loses his relish for spiritual things: his love for the Word diminishes, his delight in prayer vanishes, his heart becomes empty and dissatisfied. In short, he becomes miserable. Consider the scripture:

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” - Rom 7:24

When Peter had denied the Lord, we read that he went out and “wept”— wept not profusely but bitterly, showing his joyless and miserable condition. His power for service is destroyed. Appreciation of the salvation

which is ours, gratitude to the One who has done so much for us, compassion for the souls of the lost, obedience to the Saviour's commands, all demand that we should publish abroad the glad tidings of divine grace. But how can I tell others of Christ's power to deliver from sin if I am living in it myself? How can I speak of the joy of salvation if I have lost it? How can I talk of the unspeakable blessedness of walking with God if I am out of communion with Him? We cannot serve God and mammon. We cannot live a life which is displeasing to God and be used in the service of Christ. Selfishness, worldliness, the lying tongue, the unforgiving spirit, a lack of mercy – all of those things in me, which I may try to tuck away and only show in fits and starts, misrepresent Christ before the world and before you all. A sheep's position in glory is affected. A place in glory is due solely to the grace of God, but the believer's position in glory is determined by his works, service, obedience as a believer. Every act performed in the name of Christ, every service which was constrained by the love of Christ, everything done for the glory of Christ, will in the coming day, receive its due reward. In proportion as we have failed to use our talents in the service of our Master, and instead, have indulged in self-pleasing and carnal gratification, we shall be losers in this world and in the world to come. The figure which our Lord used at the close of the Sermon on the Mount—the building of a house—is amplified at 1 Corinthians 3:

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” – 1Cor. 3:11-15

Every Christian is a builder. The foundation upon which he builds is Christ Himself. The materials he uses are the deeds and acts of his every-day life. The testing of our handiwork will take place at the second coming of Christ. The works which will be destroyed are those that were wrought in the energy of the flesh. The works which abide and receive a reward were those that were energized by the Holy Spirit and done out of loving gratitude to Christ. There will be a class who will “suffer loss” (of reward), whose works will be burned up, but who will be saved “yet so as by fire.” We have a striking and solemn illustration of this class in the case of Lot. Lot was a “righteous” man (2Pe 2:6-7). But his life did not count for God. Self filled his horizon. He was a worldling, occupied mostly with the things of time and sense. Instead of living as a stranger and pilgrim on earth, he went and dwelt in the wicked city of Sodom. The time came when God determined to destroy that city of iniquity. Because Lot was one of His children God sent an angel and delivered him. But all Lot's possessions perished (which were many), were burned up in Sodom. Personally, he was saved, but he “suffered loss.” So will it be in the future. Lot was a pattern case. Those who are putting into their life nothing but wood, hay, stubble—dead works—will be the losers throughout eternity. His conduct will bring chastisement from the Lord. God is holy and sin must be punished. The sins of the believer must receive “*a just recompense of reward*” (Heb 2:2) equally as much as the sins of the unbeliever. The difference between them is not in the fact of punishment but in the time of punishment. The sins of the unbeliever will be punished in the world to come: the sins of the believer are punished in this world, here and now. Such was the experience of Jacob, of Moses, of David. They were chastised severely. If God's children walk disorderly and disobediently they are not cast off or disinherited, but they are chastised with the rod of divine justice. If we sin we shall suffer—suffer in our bodies, in our souls, in our circumstances. This is not to say, as did Job's friends, that suffering in our bodies or circumstance is always evidence of specific sin. We all sin. Some men feel afflictions and persecutions in their circumstances that are

trials of faith and glorify God in the resulting peaceable fruit of righteousness and the perfecting of the soul in his outlook toward God. But suppose the Divine chastisement, that comes as a result of sin, does not soften the heart, then what? Suppose that instead of the transgressor humbling himself beneath the mighty hand of God, he hardens his heart? Suppose that instead of confessing and forsaking his sins he deliberately continues therein? In that case God will remove him by the stroke of death.

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away.” John 15:2

That is, removeth it from the earth. Again, that is not to say that the only conclusion to be drawn from the death of a man is that he had hardened his heart and was unfruitful, as many of the apostles and John the Baptist experienced horrific deaths in zeal for the Lord. But he believer is to be a fruit-bearer, and if he fails to fulfill the purpose of his calling then God will not permit him to cumber the ground. It is to this the Apostle John refers when he says: *“There is a sin unto death” (1Jo 5:16)*. This is physical death, and the sin referred to is committed by a believer. We understand this Scripture to mean—there is a limit to God’s forbearance: after the believer has reached a certain point, he then “sins unto death.” We have an illustration of this in the case of Moses. For his sin of striking the rock, the Lord cut him off out of the land of the living, refusing to allow him to enter Canaan. But that he was not lost is proven by the fact that he appeared with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. For a Christian to continue in known sin, and especially to remain unaffected by the chastening of the Lord, is to endanger and imperil his life. Hear now the conclusion of the whole matter:

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” - Gal 6:7-8

We must ask the Lord for a greater hatred of sin, for a greater fear of displeasing Him, for a greater desire to cleave to Him more closely.

The truth of divine preservation is designed for the deepening of the Christian’s gratitude. It makes known to him the fullness of that grace which God bestows upon His people. It declares that He who has begun a good work in them, will continue and complete it (Phil 1:6). It assures us that nothing shall ever separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord (Rom 8:35-39). It reveals the blessed fact that the power of God is engaged to protect them from evil and deliver them from their foes: God *“hath raised up an horn of salvation for us...that we should be saved from our enemies” (Luk 1:69, 71)*. What a song of thanksgiving should this raise in the hearts of the redeemed! Again, this blessed truth of the saints’ security is intended as a divine tonic for our sagging, weary spirits. Fighting the good fight of faith, yet how often the battle seems to be going against us! If it wasn’t for the comforting assurance of God’s promises we might well be in doubt, minute by minute, as to the ultimate issue – eternal life. Living in a hostile world, Satan and his hosts seeking to bring about our destruction, having no might of our own, despair would fill our hearts were God to leave us to ourselves. But blessed be His name, He does not. His ear is open to our cries, His arm ever ready to defend us. *“The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psa 34:7)*. We must be very careful though – the doctrine of the divine preservation of the saints is capable of being perverted and “wrested” to men’s destruction (2Pe 3:16). Religious hypocrites, empty professors, baptized worldlings, make a wrong use of it whereby the truth of God is dishonored. They draw from it a peace and joy to which they are not entitled.

They assume, without warrant, that they are saved, and though they have none of the marks of regeneration and bear no spiritual fruit, nevertheless they persuade themselves that God will carry them through to heaven. Satan has deceived them into thinking that sometime in the past, years ago, they believed in Christ, and discovering that the Bible teaches “once saved, always saved,” they go on in a carnal confidence from which the great majority are never aroused until they awake in hell. Because this blessed truth of God’s preservation of His children has been so perverted by multitudes who are not His children, there have been a few otherwise sincere preachers and expositors who have thought that it is better for the pulpit to be silent thereon. But this is a pitting of worthless human reason against the infinite wisdom of God. He has published it plainly enough in His Word, and so should His servants. Moreover, to follow such a course would be withholding from the children part of their necessary “bread”. The abuse of a doctrine is no proof that it is a harmful one. If all men were gluttons, that would be no argument for my declining to eat any food, but it would be a caution for me to use it temperately.

Divine preservation and human perseverance:

God Himself has safeguarded the truth of divine preservation by inseparably linking it with the complimentary truth of human perseverance. Nowhere has God promised to preserve anybody while he is following a course of self-will and self-pleasing. It is not in the path of fleshly indulgence and conformity to this world, but in the highway of holiness that His protecting grace is found. If I deliberately drink poison no praying will deliver me from its deadly effects. If I neglect the means of grace then my soul will starve. If I presume upon God’s goodness and expect Him to shield me when I deliberately run into the place of temptation, then I shall be justly left to reap as I have sown. Walking in obedience to God’s commands and precepts is no meritorious condition of earning salvation, but it is the proof that we are saved. Bringing forth fruit to the glory of God does not unite us to the true Vine, but makes it manifest that we are united to Him. Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, mortifying our members which are upon the earth, taking up the cross and following Christ, do not secure a title to heaven, but show that we are journeying heavenward. A steady perseverance in the use of the divine means of grace, in running the race that is set before us, and in pressing onwards to a closer walk with Christ, are the evidences that we are blest with persevering grace, *and “are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb 10:39).*

We need to be on our guard against a one-sided view of salvation. While it be true that one who is born of the Spirit has been saved, it is equally true that, from another standpoint, his salvation is yet future:

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. - Romans 13:11

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. - Hebrews 9:28

Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. – 1Pe 1:5.

The Christian has been saved from the eternal penalty of sin, but he is now being saved from the power and pollution of sin. He has been “*delivered from the wrath to come*” (1Th 1:10), but he now needs delivering from

the assaults of Satan, from the temptations of an enticing world, from the smoky pie finger of the “flesh” which still dwells within him. The Christian is still in the place of great danger. He has not yet entered into his eternal rest – and is now, instead, called to *“fight the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12)* and to take unto him *“the whole armour of God” (Eph 6:11)*. It is the fact that the Christian is yet in the place of danger which gives force to the warnings of scripture, which are as necessary to him as are the promises and precepts. The promises of God are the foundation of our prayers, being the ground upon which faith rests. But these promises were never designed to render the means of grace needless. Instead, they are given to stir us up to make diligent use of them, but a corrupt heart turns even the grace of God into lasciviousness, nor will any legal threat or threat of danger prevent this. The thunders and lightnings, and the earthquake which shook Mount Sinai, greatly terrified Israel, yet a few days later we find them dancing merrily around the golden calf. That is what fallen human nature is like - almost killed with fear at some awful providence, yet laughing at that fear as soon as the shock is over. Nothing but the grace of God can set the heart right and then keep it settled. The doctrine of divine preservation affords a stable prop to upright hearts, but it doesn’t give a wanton cloak for sin to corrupt hearts. When Christ says that He gives unto His sheep *“eternal life, and that they shall never perish” (Joh 10:28)*, He affirms their everlasting security. But when the Holy Spirit announces that it is through *“faith and patience” that we “inherit the promises” (Heb 6:12)*, we are thereby taught that actual perseverance in the way of faith and holiness must be our evidence that we are of His sheep. A belief in the doctrine of divine preservation is worthless if it is not accompanied by the grace of perseverance. The doctrine of divine preservation provides no shelter to either laziness or licentiousness. If preservation is promised to the saints, then we must be found pressing forward along the path of duty, using the means of grace or else the doctrine will condemn me. Christians are exhorted to make their *“calling and election sure” (2Pe 1:10)*, not by taking anything for granted, but by using “all diligence” so as to be internally convinced – seeing daily tokens of their salvation by adding unto faith, courage, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, love. We should prove our grace by a growth in grace. We should evidence that we are good-ground hearers by bringing forth fruit. There is real need for such exhortations as the above: appearance of grace and faith are often found, which sparkle and flash for a time, like meteors in the sky, and then vanish away. There are some who, like the foolish virgins, bear a lighted lamp and keep up a Christian profession, and yet have no oil in their vessels—no grace in their hearts. There are stony-ground hearers who receive the Word with eagerness, yea with joy, and yet have no root in themselves. There are some of whom God gives another heart, as He did to Saul (1Sa 10:9), but not a new heart; and such may prophesy for a season, as Saul did, and taste the joy which prophets taste, and yet be rejected from the kingdom as Saul was. *“Many be called, but few chosen” (Mat 20:16)*. Once called, we must both ask the Lord for and strive toward a steady and continuous growth in grace and in being fruitful, and not barren, in the knowledge of the Lord as the real, tangible evidence of **“not (being) conformed to this world: but (being) transformed (daily, as a process and progression) by the renewing of your mind (again, daily), that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” - Ro 12:2**

I love you all.