

Preservation and Perseverance of the Saints as Proven by God's Perfect Attributes

(Sermon to the saints at Westboro Baptist Church, April 22, 2018)

*If thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my room endured
The whole of wrath divine;
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.*

-Augustus Toplady

This doctrine of grace, the saints' final perseverance in grace to glory is, that those who are truly regenerated, effectually called, and really converted, and internally sanctified by the Spirit and grace of God, shall persevere in grace to the end, and shall be everlastingly saved; or shall never finally and totally fall, so as to perish everlastingly. On February 18, 2018, I provided a sermon on this topic, and I recommend that you read it again. Today, with the Lord's help, I hope to speak about the things relating to God's perfect attributes which are comely concerning this sound doctrine (*Titus 2:1*).

But first, what is "sound doctrine"? *2 Timothy 4:3*: **"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears."** *Titus 1:9*: **"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."** *Titus 2:1*: **"But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine."** "Doctrine" is a good Bible word; it means: teaching, learning, instruction, precepts. "Sound" means: be sound, be whole, wholesome, to be in good health, safe and sound; and metaphorically of Christians it means whose opinions are free from any mixture of error. (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of The Bible)

This doctrine of grace can be clearly seen by looking at and studying the *perfections of God* as he has revealed them to us by his Word. Whatever is agreeable to them, and made necessary by them, must be true; and whatever is contrary to them, and reflects dishonor on them, must be false. The doctrine of the saints' final perseverance is agreeable to, and becomes necessary by them, and therefore must be true. But the contrary, that of the apostasy of real saints, so as to perish everlastingly, is repugnant to them, and reflects dishonor on them, and therefore must be false. The perfections of God, which are manifestly displayed in the doctrine of the saints' final perseverance, and by which it is confirmed, are the following.

The immutability of God.

God is unchangeable. He asserts this: "**I am the Lord; I change not**": and he himself draws this inference from it, "**Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.**" *Malachi 3:6*. If they are consumed, or perish everlastingly, God must change in his love to them, which he never does, but rests in it; and in his purposes and designs concerning them. *Zephaniah 3:17*: "**The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.**" And if he changes in his love towards those whom he has appointed to salvation, he must consign over to damnation; and his promises of grace made to them, and his blessings of grace bestowed on them, must be reversed. Yet, he says: *Psalm 89:34*: "**My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.**" And see *Job 23:13*: "**But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.**" The doctrine of the saints' final perseverance asserts the unchangeableness of God, and does honor to it; but the contrary doctrine makes him changeable in his nature, will, and grace, and reflects dishonor on him. Thank God for his assurance from *James 1:17*: "**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.**"

The unsoundness you will find amongst fallen man on the doctrine of hell leads to a huge mixture of error in understanding the doctrine of the perseverance and preservation of the saints. So, I want to share with you some words from Isaac Watts from his Discourse upon – and titled – the "Eternity of the Punishments of Hell." Yes--that Isaac Watts--that hymnist without peer in the last 300 years.

" I hope that the whole of these sermons, by the blessing of God, will be made happily useful to Christians, to awaken and warn them [and prepare them for heaven], ... The last discourses of this book, especially the "eternity of the punishments of hell," have been in latter and former years made a matter of dispute; and were I to pursue my enquiries into this doctrine, only by the aids of the light of nature and reason, I fear my natural tenderness might warp me aside from the rules and the demands of strict justice, and the wise and holy government of the great God.

But as I confine myself almost entirely to the revelation of Scripture in all my searches into the things of revealed religion and Christianity, I am constrained to forget or to lay aside that softness and tenderness of animal nature which might lead me astray, and to follow the unerring dictates of the word of God.

The Scripture frequently, and in the plainest and strongest manner, asserts the everlasting punishment of sinners in hell; and that by all the methods of expression which are used in Scripture to signify, an everlasting continuance.

God's utter hatred and aversion to sin, in this perpetual punishment of it, are manifested many ways:

(1.) By the just and severe *threatening*: of the wise and righteous Governor of the world, which are scattered up and down in his Word.

(2.) By the *veracity* of God in his *intimations* or *narratives* of past events, as Jude v. 7. "Sodom and Gomorrah suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

(3.) By his express *predictions* ([Matthew 25:46](#)). "These shall go away into everlasting punishment" ([2 Thessalonians 1:9](#)). "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction;" and I might add,

(4.) by the *veracity* and *truth* of all his holy Prophets and Apostles, and his Son Jesus Christ at the head of them, whom he has sent to acquaint mankind with the rules of their duty, and the certain judgment of God in a holy correspondence therewith, and that in such words as seem to admit of no way of escape, or of hope for the condemned criminals.

I must confess here, if it were possible for the great and blessed God any other way to vindicate his own eternal and unchangeable hatred of sin, the inflexible justice of his government, the wisdom of his severe threatenings, and the veracity of his predictions, if it were also possible for him, without this terrible execution, to vindicate the veracity, sincerity, and wisdom of the Prophets and Apostles, and Jesus Christ his Son, the greatest and chiefest of his divine messengers; and then, if the blessed God should at *any time*, in a consistence with his glorious and incomprehensible perfections, release those wretched creatures from their acute pains and long imprisonment in hell, either with a design of the utter destruction of their' beings by annihilation, or to put them into some unknown world, upon a new foot of trial, I think I ought cheerfully and joyfully to accept this appointment of God, for the good of millions of my fellow-creatures, and add my joys and praises to all the *song: and triumphs* of the heavenly world in the day, of such a divine and glorious release of these prisoners.

But I feel myself under a necessity of confessing, that I am utterly unable to solve these difficulties according to the discoveries of the New Testament, which must be my constant rule of faith, and hope, and expectation, with regard to myself and others. I have read the strongest and best writers on the other side, yet after all my studies I have not been able to find any way how these difficulties may be removed, and how the divine perfections, and the conduct of God in his Word, may be fairly vindicated without the establishment of this doctrine, as awful and formidable as it is."

And, if you think I had to go to some library hidden away in some obscure place to find this writing, I must tell you that I cut and pasted these words quoted above from Time Magazine in their April 20, 2011, issue, entitled "What if there is no hell." You must have

a healthy understanding and love for the doctrine of hell to have a healthy understanding and love for the doctrine of the preservation and perseverance of the saints.

The wisdom of God

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... wherein he has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.” *Ephesians 1:3, 8*. The wisdom of God appears in this doctrine and is very conspicuous in the salvation of his people; which it would not be, should they perish. No wise man, who has an end in view, but he will devise and make use of proper means; and will, if in his power, make those means effectual to attain the end. The end which God has in view, and has fixed, with respect to his people, is the salvation of them; and it can never be consistent with his wisdom to appoint insufficient means, or not make those means effectual, which it is in his power to do; which must be the case, if any of those he has appointed to salvation should perish. Thank God he has fixed the end of our salvation. He has provided his Son to be the author of it, by his obedience, sufferings, and death (*Hebrews 5:8-9*); and has appointed as means to the enjoyment of this salvation, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth (*2 Thessalonians 2:13*); for which purpose he sends his Spirit to sanctify them, and work faith in them, whereby these means become effectual, and the end is answered—**“[E]ven the salvation of [our] souls.”** (*1 Peter 1:9*). But where would be his wisdom to appoint men to salvation (*Hebrews 1:14*), and not save them at last? To send his Son to redeem them (*Romans 3:24*), and they be never the better for it? (I refer you to Ben’s recent sermon on this subject). And to send his Spirit into them, to begin a good work of grace (*Philippians 1:6*), and not finish it? But this is not the case, he has put the work of redemption into the hands of his Son, who has completed it (*John 19:30*); and assigned the work of sanctification, in its beginning, progress, and issue, to the divine Spirit, who is equal to it, and will perform it (*John 16:7, 13*); and throughout the whole, God abounds towards his people in all wisdom and prudence. Speaking of Ephesians Chapter 1, I tell you this: if there is ever a time you need cheering up, read that chapter. Then, read it again. You will rejoice! And, always remember and never forget, *Romans 8: 29-30*: **“For whom he did foreknow (know with approbation and favor, as similarly used in *Matthew 7:23*), he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.**

The power of God

According to *1 Peter 1:5*, God's elect "**are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**" The power of God is greatly concerned in this preservation and perseverance of the saints. Such who are elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, and are regenerated by his grace, are "**kept by his power to salvation,**" so that they shall never perish, but be everlastingly saved. *Isaiah 26:1*: "**In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.**" Now there's a security system worthy of the name. And if you want more assurance that the power of God is invested in the preservation of his people, check out *Zechariah 2:5*: "**For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.**" No enemy can possibly break through such walls, bulwarks, and fortifications, to destroy them. God is all powerful, his power is irresistible, nothing can withstand it, nor overcome it; nothing in earth and hell is a match for it. *Daniel 4:35*: "**And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"** And this power of his can never be weakened, nor his hand shortened, that he cannot save; which must be the case, if any of those kept by his power perish. But it is not the case, as Isaiah the prophet tells us in two distinct places: *Isaiah 50:2*: "**Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.**" *Isaiah 59:1*: "**Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.**"

The goodness, grace, and mercy of God

The goodness, grace, and mercy of God, confirm this truth. *Psalms 103:17*: "**But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him**" which it would not be, should any of those that truly fear him perish. Only God's elect "**fear him**" as described in that verse. *Lamentations 3:22*: "**It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not**"; which they would, should any of his elect be consumed. But because of his tender mercies they are not consumed: nor can it be thought that that God, who is "*gracious and merciful, abundant in goodness and truth*" (*Exodus 34:6*); who has, of his "**abundant mercy, begotten again his elect**" (*1 Peter 1:3*); and because he is "**rich in mercy,**" and for his "**great love**" to them, has "**quickened**" them when "**dead in trespasses and sins**" (*Ephesians 2:4-5*); will, after all this, suffer them to

fall, so as to perish everlastingly? No, *Psalm 138:8* answers: "**the Lord will perfect that which concerneth**" them, his work of grace upon them, and the whole salvation of them: the reason is, "**Thy mercy, O Lord, endures for ever!**" and then follows a prayer of faith; "**Forsake not the work of thine own hands!**" which God never will.

The justice of God

The justice of God makes the perseverance of the saints necessary. God is righteous in all his ways and works, and so in the work of salvation. *Psalm 145:17*: "**The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.**" *Genesis 18:25*: "**That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?**" He is a just God, and a Savior; his justice is, and must be glorified, in the salvation of men, as the other attributes of his and it is through Christ's making satisfaction for sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness. (*Psalm 119:142; Daniel 9:24*). And can it be imagined, that God should accept of the righteousness of his Son, and express a well pleasedness in it, because by it his law is magnified and made honorable (*Isaiah 42:21*); that he should impute it to his people, and give them faith to receive it (*Philippians 3:9; Romans 10:6-11*), and plead it as their justifying righteousness (*Psalm 43:1*); and yet, after all, suffer them to perish? No way. Where could be his justice, to punish those for whose sins Christ has made satisfaction, and God himself has discharged their debt? *Psalm 85:1-3*: "**LORD, ... thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.**" It is not consistent with the justice of God to punish sin twice; once in the surety, and again in those he has redeemed; which must be the case, if any for whom Christ suffered should perish eternally; for to perish eternally is the same as to be punished with everlasting destruction. (*2 Thessalonians 1:7-10*) See Isaac Watts' excerpts on pages 2-4 above. Well said August Toplady: "*Payment God cannot twice demand, First at my bleeding Surety's hand, And then again at mine.*"

The faithfulness of God

The faithfulness of God secures the final perseverance of the saints; God is faithful to his counsels, to his covenant, and to his promises concerning their salvation, and will never suffer his faithfulness to fail; which must fail if they perish. I give you a sampling from the

Bible: 2 Samuel 23:5: “Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.” Isaiah 49:7: “Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.” 1 Corinthians 1:9: “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” 1 Corinthians 10:13: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” 2 Thessalonians 3:3: “But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.” Hebrews 10:23: “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)” 1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Hebrews 6:17-18: “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” But God is faithful, who has called them by his grace (*Galatians 1:15*), and will confirm them to the end (*1 Corinthians 1:8*); will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear (*1 Corinthians 10:13*); will establish them (*1 Peter 5:10*), and keep them from evil (*2 Thessalonians 3:3*); and will preserve them blameless to the coming of Christ (*1 Thessalonians 5:23*). Faithful is he who has promised, who also will do it (*1 Thessalonians 5:24*). *Philippians 1:6*: “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

I love you. Amen.