

## **The Doctrine of Never-Ending Perseverance**

There are several secular studies that have examined the characteristics of successful people in their effort to determine whether or not there was a pattern for success, and, if so which attributes were most responsible for it. They evaluated such things as wealth, education, looks, personality, family relationships, connections, etc. The result of this study was that perseverance was by far the single most important quality that caused success. What is success? The world view of success can be summed up simply as the accumulation of material wealth, or fame or prestige, or power. The one who has them all of course, has reached highest pinnacle of success.

Perseverance is also one of the essential characteristics of a “successful” Christian. However here, it is perseverance in the faith, and in the application of what Jesus taught. This faith that saves is the faith that will persevere to the very end of life! Any faith other than a persevering faith is not a saving faith regardless of what other essential characteristics may have manifested and led one to presume that it was. This essentialness of perseverance in faith is what I call the Doctrine of Never Ending Perseverance. None of this means that one cannot know whether or not one is saved until the end. It’s what one knows in the heart that, combined with the other evidences, that brings joy and a sense of peace like none other. It’s that “eirene” peace of being one with God that brings us continuous spiritual joy, comfort, and gratitude and perseverance. While severe backsliding may occur at times, the saved soul is nevertheless eternally saved. In the end, the instantaneous process of glorification will remove all remaining blemishes of the soul.

There is no direct mention of this doctrine anywhere in Scripture, yet it implied in a variety of ways in many places. For instance, in Matthew 24:13, where Jesus said, “*but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*” Again in Matthew 10:22 where Jesus said, “*And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*” Mark also recorded these same words of Jesus.

There are numerous other references that speak of the perseverance to the end as a condition of a saving faith. In John 8:31 Jesus, says, “... *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;*” “Continue” is from the Greek word “menos” which also means “endure” or “stay.” To the end is implied, and is obvious except, to the mind seeking “loopholes.”

Each of these quotations from Scripture, are simply expressing the essential nature of perseverance. Might we not therefore classify such firm clear statements as being worthy of a doctrinal stature? Every person who “comes to Christ”, that is whose faith is unto salvation, must and will persevere in the faith unto the end. Evidence of the saving faith will express itself daily to the end through sincere worship, love, prayer, humility, study of Scripture, and obedience to our Lord and Master Christ Jesus. It will also be demonstrated by unrelenting service in the ministries each saved soul is given. You may ask, as Spurgeon observed in one of his many sermons: How shall I endure to the end? How shall I stand fast in our severe trial? If my temptations are multiplied, if my pains are increased, if my bereavements should follow one upon another, or if I should be cast down into the depths of adversity, how shall I endure it? How shall I be kept steadfast year after year, and be brought home safely at last?” To these questions there are bad news answers as well as good news answers.

The bad news is you can't! Your efforts to do so are doomed to failure before you begin. But the good news is that He can and will! It's His perseverance that never fails or ends, not ours. It may seem to be ours, but it is always his that is imputed to us through the indwelling Holy Spirit. We are assured of this from the words in Philippians 1:6 that tells us that we are to be “...*confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*” Who is He? He is the Holy Spirit. Begun what good work? The process where the described qualities manifest and grow in those who have genuine saving faith. It is that process called sanctification, that is preparing you for heavenly service. How long? Until the day we are to join Jesus in heaven. So we see that it's His perseverance imputed to us the faithful that causes us to continue to the end, not by our own strength, but by His.

Sounds easy. In that sense, it is. What we must know with certainty is that we have the saving faith that activates this good work. That's easy too. If He is working in you, you will know it, because you will be a better Christian next year than you were this year, and you are a better Christian today than you were a year ago. What do I mean, "better"? You will have been motivated to study the Scripture diligently, and therefore will have kept learning more and more of God's will through His Word. Your prayer life will have become more sincere, and more in accordance with His will, because you will better understand His will. Your sensitivity to, and control over your sinful nature will keep improving because of the strength and guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Your love for, and gratitude to Jesus as your Savior will grow, as will your acceptance of Christ Jesus as your moment-by-moment, 24-7, Lord and Master. Your control over your sinful nature will continue to increase through your ever improving obedience to His will. At first, not all of the mentioned growth elements will be concurrently practiced. Some will take time to manifest.

If an honest assessment of yourself doesn't indicate these workings, perhaps it is time to go back to "square one" to find out what really has happened. Who fooled you with shallow, inadequate or false teaching, into believing you were saved, or have you been fooling yourself? Have you been on a head trip instead of a heart trip where your "belief" is concerned? As Scripture says, do it while it is yet today, because tomorrow may be too late or may never come. Where faith and the quality of its day-to-day application are concerned, one of the characteristics that is inherent in every persevering soul is an immediate response to what ever it is that requires an action. Delay, procrastination, or lack of decisiveness are not the ways of a persevering soul.

There are great examples of incredible perseverance in the secular world as well. How can these people who are not saved, and who do not have the strength of the Holy Spirit to help them, persevere so well? Without getting involved in the many complexities, we might consider the following. The unbeliever is relatively free of certain "encumbrances" that all believers are subject to. The perseverance of believers is always

under a three-fold attack, that is by Satan, mostly through his principalities and powers that govern this world, by the world itself that hates the believer as it hates Jesus, and by the residual of our own evil natures that remain in us, as the sanctifying process continually seeks to remove.

No doubt, the secular person who perseveres in seeking earthly success, also has earthly enemies who may seek to undermine his or her goals. However, within his arsenal, which he may not hesitate to use to achieve his goals, are such things as ruthlessness, deception, theft, belligerence and even murder, if he or she deems it appropriate. Also, the satanic powers can be of great help, depending on whether or not they see that success as being beneficial to their anti-God, anti-humanity programs. Looking throughout history, and especially today, it is not difficult to see Satan's powers in control of many of those who are the persevering, especially in the world leaders who persevere mightily to reach their lofty goals after surrendering their souls to Satan. Many of Hollywood "successes" as they so typify the antithesis of Christian virtues, can be seen as likely products of a Satan-type "grace." These conditions are far more prevalent than any of us realize. If it is so, it explains why we have had such abysmal Godless leadership at the highest levels of our government, and why decadence is spreading so rapidly.

While perseverance of the believer is founded on faith in Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, each individual must do his or her part in this process. It doesn't happen by itself. Just as the earthly power to light a light or power a motor always occurs but a millisecond after the wall switch is flipped, so also is the Holy Spirit waiting in your heart to provide your soul with His light and His power to serve you in your persevering journey of sanctification. However, you must, "flip the switch", that is call on the Holy Spirit in single-minded prayer, for that light and power to manifest. It was well said by Dr. Missler: "That without Him you can't, and without you, He won't". Finally, the greatly inspired Spurgeon summed it all up with these five simple words, "Holiness is persevering in obedience".

When James speaks of works that prove one's faith he isn't referring to a Mother Teresa-type of work, it's the inner works within the soul through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit that allows one to claim salvation and to persevere in good works. These external works performed by the redeemed soul in humble pride-less sincerity also enhance one's place in the eternal kingdom, but do not of themselves cause salvation. We find evidence of this in the following:

In Hebrews 3:6 we read *"but Christ as a son over his house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."* Hebrews 3:14 reads, *"For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."* In Revelation 2:26 Jesus says, *"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations."* This is also what Paul so valued and feared he would loose and become a "castaway" from the eternal kingdom, all because of his possible ministry failures. (1Corinthians 9:27) While the reference in Revelation speaks of works continuing to the end, doesn't it implicitly speak also of faith persevering to the end? How can any works be of eternal value unless they are provided by one who has persevered in the faith?

There are many verses that stress perseverance from the perspective of gaining the inheritance of heaven. These should not be confused with those dealing with salvation. Inheritance comes solely by the collective good works of the saved soul. To be allowed into heaven is not the same as being an heir to heaven and thereby, being a king or priest, and part of the bride of Christ. The difference is in the result of the extent and effectiveness of one's work in preparation for heavenly service. As Dr. Missler likes to say "just because you have a room in a hotel, doesn't mean that you have inherited any part of it."

It seems evident therefore that the "works" of the redeemed soul provide a two-fold spiritual benefit. First, as one perseveres in the faith, the works are evidence of that faith and second, the works themselves become what Jesus will judge and use at the Bema Seat judgment in determining our positions in heaven.

Please be assured that in no way does this commentary suggest that one can lose one's salvation once it is obtained, or that one must wait until the end of life to know with certainty that one is saved. The message here has to do only with perseverance as ongoing evidence of a genuine saving faith. This evidence serves a two-fold purpose in its blessedness. First, it's of great comfort to feel, and to thereby know that the Holy Spirit is at work in us, sanctifying, and perfecting us toward that glorious future. Second, if as the years go by and that evidence is no longer felt for some period of time, it should serve as an early warning that something is wrong and is in need of serious attention. To one who is indeed serious about their salvation, and who in their right mind wouldn't be, they should want to know what has happened. Is it possible that they have been living that deadly presumptuous faith mentioned in James 2:20 or as characterized by the seed sown on rocky or weed-infested ground as in the parable of the sower? Paul, in 2 Corinthians 13:5 admonishes everyone to "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.*" Isn't this God's way of telling us to check periodically on our perseverance in the faith?

Both types in the parable of the sower felt the sudden ecstasy of the faith that may have gone on for a considerable length of time before it succumbed to worldly conditions and pressures. Therefore it didn't persevere, thus proving itself to be false. In those cases the Holy Spirit was never there. It was a counterfeit faith set up by the evil one that was at work for that while, and who cleverly and tragically left them convinced that they were saved. These are people who profess to be Christians, but sadly, are possessors of a false dead faith. For those, I pray that they will recognize this as evidenced by their lack of spiritual growth, and will effectually seek to "recommit" themselves to repentance, faith and obedience in the spirit of humility, and with a resolve to better know God through serious prayer and the study of his Word.