

“Assurance of Perseverance” □ WCF 17.2.e (TPH p929)

2024.05.05 Sabbath School Lesson

Hopewell ARPC, Culleoka, TN

17.2. This perseverance of the saints depends, not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father;^a upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ;^b the abiding of the Spirit and of the seed of God within them;^c and the nature of the covenant of grace:^d from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.^e

e. John 10:25–30 25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. 26 But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. 30 I and My Father are one.”

2Thes 3:1–5 1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, 2 and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. 5 Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

1John 2:18–19 18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

Jn 10:25–30

- Jesus’s words and works both attest to Who He is, and what He came to do
- People come to faith, because they’re His sheep (not the other way around)
- Jesus brings them to faith by making them to hear His voice
- Jesus makes us to follow Him because He knows us
- Because Jesus gives believers eternal life, it is impossible for them to perish
- Because Jesus holds believers in His hand, it is impossible for anyone to snatch them out
- Because the Father has given believers to the Son, it is impossible that any could revoke this gift
- Because the Father holds believers in His hand, it is impossible for anyone to

snatch them out

▫ Because God has determined that it would be by saving His sheep that it would be displayed that the Father and the Son are One, it is impossible that He would permit their salvation to fail

2Th 3:1–5

- The Lord is the One Who makes us stand.
- The Lord is the One Who guards us.
- In the Lord is the confidence that we will keep doing as Scripture commands us.
- The Lord directs our hearts in the path determined for us by the love of God
- The Lord directs our hearts to stay in that path by the same determination and patience from Christ in which He Himself went to the Christ

1Jn 2:18–19

- Those who are of the light, of the true faith in the true Christ, continue therein to the end.
- Apostasy is no argument against the certainty of the perseverance of the saints. Rather, it is evidence that there are those who are in the church but not of the church.

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

So, we're looking especially at the scriptures. Uh, that undergird. That last phrase that last Clause. From all which arise at also. The certainty and infallibility thereof. In Article 2. Of the chapter on perseverance. This perseverance of the Saints, depends. Not upon their own free will. But upon the immutability of the decree of election flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God, the Father Upon the efficacy of the Merit and intercession of Jesus Christ.

The abiding of the spirit and of the seed of God within them. And the nature of the Covenant of Grace. From all which ariseth also. The certainty and infallibility.

In other words, Uh, dear children. Of all ages. The Lord teaches us. To expect to be confident of perseverance in the faith. Uh, he teaches us to expect that he is going to keep us by his grace in Jesus Christ that he is going to grow. Uh in this life and he will keep us to the end.

And at the last we will be Perfected in Conformity to Christ perfected. In the enjoyment of Christ perfected. The The service of Christ. And the enjoyment and service of the Triune God in the Lord Jesus Christ. So this is the expectation in which Believers are to live. Not that we would be complacent but that we would be supported uh under disappointments and setbacks And that we would be awake and and prodded.

If we are complacent. Uh, and content not to grow. When the Lord is is persevering and growing. Those who are his And so from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility.

Thereof is a word to us of comfort and confidence. And, They give three different areas of scripture proof.

One from John 10 one from second Thessalonians three and one from first John two, And then God's Providence to us we have now just been through first John 2. John John chapter 10? Uh, Jesus is actually talking to those Uh Jews who have not believed in him. And in verse 24, right before, what you have on the page here, it says in the Jews surrounded him and said to him.

How long do you keep us in doubt, if you are the Christ, tell us plainly. Often those who have not understood will blame others for not having communicated clearly enough. Uh that happens in human relationships. And we always want to give others the benefit of the doubt and try and communicate more clearly and so forth.

But we should be careful. Of blaming others of that ourselves. And certainly, we must not blame God. Or the Lord Jesus, as the Jews were doing here. Uh, when there is a difficulty we look to him. So Jesus answered them, I told you. In other words, I've told you pretty plainly And you do not believe.

The works that I do in my father's name. They bear witness of me. Okay, so there's his word. And his works but a test to who he is that he is the Christ and what he has come to do to deliver. His people. And then he tells them not just that they aren't believing, he tells them the cause of their not believing.

The cause of they're not believing is not that the Lord Jesus has not spoken clearly. Uh, and this is something that you may gently, it depends on your relationship with the person or your calling Yeah and your authority to say such things but this is something that you may gently tell someone who is opposing what the Bible says and they say well it's not clear here and it's not clear there some of you I know have had this ad experience.

Was someone who professes or professed? Uh, the Christian faith and decided it one day against the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you Uh, you supplied scripture after scripture, that plainly told that the Lord Jesus is Yahweh. Well, Jesus says, you do not believe because you are not of my sheep.

Okay, so he says people come to Because they're of his sheep. When you come to Faith, you know, him to be your Shepherd and you know, yourself to be his sheep and praise God. That is very encouraging, but you must not think that you became his sheep. By coming to fish.

What Jesus says here is that because he had decided to take you as his sheep forever. And from eternity, That is why people come to believe. Uh, so he says, but you do not believe because you are not of my sheep. Now it's not up to us to, uh, Uh, who are of his sheep and who are not.

Praise God. He gives us in church membership and If you're, if you're in a faithful Church where there's discipling the informative discipline, discipling on the front end, corrective discipline on the back end is much easier to just give the Judgment of Charity to whoever is in the church. Um, but this can help you in evangelism not to take.

Too much upon yourself. You want to be faithful to God's word and tell the truth accurately. You want to be wise according to God's word and tell it in the way that scripture teaches you my precept and example Uh, so I'm not saying don't strive for those things. Uh, but do not.

Feel like it depends upon you, whether or not they're going to believe. Uh, when they come to Faith, it's not because how accurately and wisely you told the gospel. When they come to Faith, it is because they were of his sheep. And he gave them faith. Now, praise God.

If he is the one who gives Faith. And if you came to Faith because you were his sheep, And what your faith did was unite him to Christ. What is there that you or anyone else could do? That could ever undo. Any of those things. And so you have this wonderful from all which ariseth, also, the certainty that the Saints will persevere the infallibility.

Of the Saints persevering. Now, how does he bring them? Bring his sheep to Faith? He says my sheep hear my voice. And I know them and they follow me. Got children. Does it is Jesus saying that he was there? Crowds around him. And some of them are his sheep and some of them aren't and he's moving his mouth.

And the ones who are his sheep, they hear the sound, but the ones who aren't his sheep that. It's kind of like, somebody has muted. The, the audio. Doesn't know what he's saying, is he? There's hearing and there's hearing. Yeah, we spent some time on this in Romans, 10 in the midweek sermon series that what we need and we pray for this every week right before the sermon, don't we?

That we wouldn't just here with our ears with the servant on Earth Fest. That the spirit would address our hearts with the words of Christ from scripture by means of that servant so that our hearts would hear the Lord Jesus. So he says my sheep hear my voice and I know then And they follow me.

Who knows? Whom It's not that we hear his voice and we recognize who he is, although that does happen. With his sheep. But the reason his sheep recognize who he is is because he knows who they are. And he is speaking to them by his word in a different way.

Then he speaks Uh, to everyone generally. So The theological language that we use is that there is the outward call and the free offer of the Gospel. That is to all But there is the effectual call and shorter catechism kits are right in the middle of this and your sort of catechism lessons aren't you?

There's the effectual call that is the means by which the spirit joins you to Jesus. So, he uses the word and he gives you life. And he gives you faith and he joins you to Jesus and all of that. Uh, we call effectual calling. So he says my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

So what do they do? They follow him. So, if you're not following him, Does he know you? You don't know that, do you? And praise God in his Providence to us. We have in the sermon text this morning when Jesus says Depart from me, I never knew you. Okay, that's why they're perishing.

Because Jesus has not known them and has not saved them. But then he gives them what they should have taken as Evidence. As alarm as warning, that Jesus didn't know them. You workers of lawlessness. Okay, so if you turn that around and you say Well, I've been brought to Faith in Jesus Christ.

I love him. I love God. With all my heart. Soul, mind and strength. Not Not as much of. Uh any of that as I wish I would. But I'm grieved by, what is lacking? The, the new nature within me, might not say it that way, I feel That that there is nothing more that I would like than the whole world.

And to love God, more fully to enjoy God himself more fully. I love my neighbor as myself and grieved by my ongoing sin and my breaking of God's law. But praise God. He is growing me. In all of those things, I'm not yet. What I should be, I'm not yet, what I will be.

But I am not now, what I was. And you say there's only one explanation for that. It's that Jesus knew me. That Jesus made me hear his voice that Jesus. Uh, has made me to follow him. And so, Jesus himself by describing All of those things. Now he rests in verse 28, to 30 Uh, he rests upon all those things, the certainty that the one who has come to Faith.

That you if you have come to Faith in Jesus Christ, if he has given you, this love for him, this love for others. Uh the grief in your sin is its sinfulness Not how embarrassed you are in front of others or what bad consequences might come to you. You don't like those things but that's not the grief of your sin.

If those things have happened then this is this is what is happening and this is who is doing it, and this is why you're persevering in Grace to the end is certain and infallible, and I give them Eternal life and they shall never perish. Okay, because Jesus gives Believers eternal life, it's impossible for them to perish.

Very obvious and straightforward. Neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand? Okay, so Grow in fits and starts and sometimes you have backslidings and setbacks and doubts and anxieties and sometimes your remaining sinfulness overcomes. And and you think something spectacularly, Wicked or speak or do something and Yet the reality.

If you're a Christian, if you're a Believer, this you're already in the hand. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. You don't perceive it. And he calls you to repent of this sin. And he alarms you in a way that drives you back to the fact that he's the one who holds in your hand.

So you can't say well Jesus is holding me in his hand. It's all right. I'll just keep on sending. If you ever wanted to. Uh call into question whether or not Jesus was holding in your hand. That would be a really good way to to cast doubt on that reality.

Um, but If it drives you back to Christ, you say Jesus is holding me in his hand. Neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand? I don't know if you children have ever experienced this but something small and you and I are small, praise God. And his hand is big in in the metaphor.

If your dad had something small in his hand, and he was Holding it gripping it like this. Are you able? If he's trying. Are you able to pull it out of his hand? No, you're not. And so the Lord Jesus uses a very apt description. For the fact that Believers cannot, Fall away.

From Grace. And of course, his hand is his father's hand because he is God. So, verse 29, my father who has given them to me, Now, Believers are a transactional gift. They love gift even between the father and the son. If the father gives people to the Who can undo by their power, who can thwart, what the love within the godhead has determined to do.

Now, you and I it's hard for us to comprehend. This isn't it? Because, When we think about what sort of gift, One person of the godhead would give to another person of the godhead. We probably don't feel like we would be high on that list. It is the infinite condescension and mercy of God.

That has devised designed such a Salvation for us. But it is as impossible for a genuine believer. To fail to persevere in the faith. As it is that the father would give his son a gift. And

that the gift that gift would be taken away. From the Sun. My father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, And no one is able to snatch them out of my father's hand.

I and my father. Are. Okay, so Jesus now Presents the doctrine of the Trinity in verse 30, but he presents it in a way. That is saying, One of the ways that God is pleased to show himself as Triune and glorify himself as Triune is by saving us. In this way.

So if the trying God has decided to show that the father and the son are one, By the way that the Triune God saves us, Will he allow that to fail? Could he allow that to fail? No. He's displaying himself, he's displaying his Triune Glory. And so, what you can do?

If you are, Uh, if you are shaken by something in your walk with the Lord and you've come and you've repented of your sin and you've embraced. God and His grace again and the Lord Jesus Christ, applying freshly that once for all sacrifice to your conscience, you can come to a place.

Uh, John 10 verse 27-30 and pray these things. Lord. I am your sheep. You made me hear your voice. Because, you know me. You're the one who made me to follow you. Uh, and These are not just doctrines for you to know accurately. These are realities given to you by the Lord Jesus to be employed in your Christian Life.

The next. Proof text that. Uh, that they have given us. The second, uh, from second Thessalonians 3.

Verses one through five.

Uh, Silas and Timothy Uh, writing to them, they say, finally Brethren pray for us. That the word of the Lord may run, swiftly. And be glorified. Just as it is with you. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable, and wicked men. For not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful.

Who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. So he's saying, pray for us that our ministry will be effective. Because not all have faith. So the Apostle Paul is saying he's saying similar to what Jesus experienced in John 10, isn't he? We preach and everywhere we go, there are those who are God's sheep.

There are those whom Jesus knows. There are those who hear Jesus's voice. Remember when we were in Romans 10. We noted, that Jesus, uh, that Paul wrote to the Ephesians that Christ came and preached to them. When did Christ stand Ephesus? Well, when the gospel came to Ephesus, when his ordained preachers uh, came to Ephesus and Christ addressed them through them.

But everywhere they go. There are those who don't believe and they attack them and Pray for them. But this word that not all have faith, if A believer in Thessalonica and you're receiving this letter. And you hear that, you may do as you might. Well, do in this morning's sermon text in, Matthew think what if that's me What?

If I'm somebody who knows to say. Lord Lord. Would I find somebody? Who actually hears faithful preaching. But I'm not believing, I'm not entering the narrow gate, I'm not walking in the confined way. What if I'm one of the many who would say to him in that day, Lord Lord in your name, did I not and so forth.

Well, in Thessalonica, they might what if I'm one of these all who don't have faith, And so the Apostle very pastorally immediately answers that difficulty. But the Lord is faithful, who will

establish you and guard you from the evil one? So what might you do in a moment of of worrying?

About yourself. And healing that you have in yourself. The capacity to fall away. Because you do, You don't have the ability to overcome Grace, but one of the reasons that we're all worried is because we know in our sinfulness That if the Lord was not preserving us by his grace, we would indeed fall away.

So in verse three, he says but the Lord is faithful. So what can you pray in a situation like that to have Assurance of your perseverance? Lord, I am unfaithful. But you are faithful. Or to put it in the language of the father. Who is so concerned about his daughter when he came to Jesus, I believe.

Help my unbelief. Okay, the Lord is faithful. Who will establish you? Lord make me to stand stabilize me. Establish me. And guard you from the evil one. Lord not only do I have in myself, this remaining unbelief and sinfulness But there is an evil, one who attacks me by trying to deceive me, and tempt me and inflame my remaining sinfulness.

But you are stronger than he is. Frustrate guard me from the evil one and inflame instead my new life from you, you gave me Faith. You make me to stand so. Uh, you you see how these uh these texts can be used the certainty and infallibility of our perseverance.

Now remember, historically, you know, maybe, you know, I'll remind you because it's been a long time since we started chapter 17 of the confession, Historically, the papists and the Armenians, both said that this reformed doctrine of perseverance was very unwise and would cause unholiness and sinfulness But it's really exactly the opposite, isn't it?

Because of, Who it is? That makes us to persevere. And therefore to whom this Doctrine turns our hearts and our minds and our prayers. When we find ourselves. Uh, on the verge of not persevering. Continuing in verse 4 and we have confidence in the Lord concerning you Both that you do and will do.

The things we command you. In other words because they know where they're doing. Currently the things that That are commanded where that comes from. That's the same place. They're hoped for future, doing comes from now. May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ?

So the Lord directs our hearts in the path that is determined for us. By the love of God. Which of course, is first of all to love him and the Lord direct our hearts. To stay in that path. By the same determination and patience from Christ. In which he himself.

Oh, there's a type of went to the cross. And so Jesus had patience. Jesus had resolved, Jesus persevered. And the reason he did all those things is because God himself. Uh, was sustaining him. The Lord. Jesus was full of the spirit beyond measure, remember. Uh, we don't receive a different Spirit or even a similar Spirit.

The Holy Spirit who makes us alive to believe the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell in your hearts. When you are adopted in Christ, is the spirit of Christ himself the same, Holy Spirit, who sustained Jesus in his human nature. Finally first, John 2. Verses 18 and 19. Little children.

It is the last Tower and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming. Even now many Antichrists have come. By which we know that it is the last hour. Okay, so If anybody asks, you do you think these are the last days? You said days? It's been the last hour for 2 000 years So, just watch out for that last Daisy stuff.

Uh, but don't lose the intensity. Of being in the last Tower just because it has been the last hour for that long. Uh, every one of us don't know, actually When we are in our literal last hour. Uh, in the No, he talks about. Those who are now Antichrists, plural of the spirit and mind of antichrist.

They went out from But they were not of us. Okay, so they're giving us a proof text. Now, that answers the question If? Perseverance in the faith by by Christians is certain and infallible. How come there are so many people who used to profess to be Christians that are now Antichrists.

How come there are so many people who used to profess to be Christians, who now, deny That the Lord Jesus has got He says. They went out from us but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. Now, this should alarm you if you don't take your church membership, seriously?

Because what are you saying here is Those whom the Lord has genuinely saved. They don't think well, the Lord saved me. I can now live my way and grow my way and be safe, and I will go to heaven. No, they say the Lord saved me. The Lord is my Lord.

If I live it's going to be his way. If I grow, it's going to be his way. If I am brought at last to the fullness of Salvation, the full enjoyment and Glory, it's going to be his way. And his way is his church, his way is his servants.

His way is, his body is a weekly assembly of the Lord's day. In the means of Grace. And so, all of these things, the Same Spirit who brought you to Faith in Christ in the first place is going to work in you increasing faithfulness under Christ in your life.

And so there are many things that can make you or that can become occasions for you to take your church membership less seriously. Broken relationships in the churches is a big one. Um, elevating personal preference over Christ's prescription in anything. Worship. Discipleship, whatever. Is another there are many things but here He tells us that those who are of the church, those who have the fellowship, that is really with the father.

And with the son, he said, in the opening verses of chapter one, Uh, Who are of us would continue with us if they had been of us. They would have continued with us. This. This is one of the reasons why, you know, the AR petrich order in its book of discipline is actually wise When it tells the Elders of the church that if someone tries to remove themselves, not from one particular congregation just to become a free agent, Not transfer to another.

Exit church membership in the physical church. That the Elders of the church are to warn them that it's basically a self-excommunication. The people he's talking about here, they weren't put under trial And expelled from the church. They just left. And the Apostle is saying, That when they did that.

They showed that they weren't saved. That's, that's really. Serious and grave, isn't it? Because he's saying if you're saved, you're going to continue. If you have fellowship with the father and with the son, you're gonna continue. And for you, that means you're putting not to your membership. It's not saying membership keeps you safe?

And saying you pleading to the father and the son? And by his grace, You will continue. Um, Sorry if they had been of us they would have continued with us but they went out that they might be made manifest that none of them were of us. Okay, so we should grieve.

When we see people turn away from the faith, When we see people exposed. As false, professors of Faith, made a false profession of Faith. We should grieve for that. But what you must not do. Is allow your own faith in Christ to be shaken. And you're on the hope of perseverance.

In the faith to be shaken. Because that perseverance in to the end. That's saying a Christian and growing in Grace and growing in faith until he brings you at last into heaven. That depends upon him. And it is still sure. Even though there are many, who seem sure to you, But who turned away and perished.

All right, let's uh, let's close in prayer. Our gracious. God and our heavenly father. How we thank you. That our Salvation is from you. From start to finish. And we do confess that we find within ourselves much potential. For falling and stumbling for unbelief and turning away for Rebellion.

We are ashamed. For how often we are unmindful of Christ and love to other things. Uh quickly, surpasses love to you. But we are grateful. That we always have him and his sacrifice and his righteousness. To come to you turn in, from our sin enjoying again, the complete cleansing of our conscience in him, the renewing of resolve from him by your spirit.

And we pray Lord that you would help us to remember the certainty. And infallibility. Of our persevering in the faith that you have given us. We pray that you would help us to have the wisdom and the skill. Not only to be able to come back to passages like this to prove the point again, theologically But give us that practical, wisdom and skill.

We ask to turn our hearts to you by use of these passages in order to make the right use of this precious Doctrine. For, we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.