

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

- “The vast majority of the worldly and thoughtless Christians among ourselves oppose the doctrine of assurance. It offends and annoys them to hear of it. They do not like others to feel comfortable and sure, because they never feel so themselves. Ask them whether their sins are forgiven, and they will probably tell you they do not know! That *they* cannot receive the doctrine of assurance is certainly no marvel.”¹

Biblical assurance for Perseverance of the Saints

- The biblical argument and textual evidence of the perseverance of the saints is abundant and self-evident.
- The simplest reading of the Bible goes to show that God desires His children to know that they are eternally safe in His hands so that they can live with confidence knowing that He is their eternal Father.
- It should be sufficient for just one verse, one line from God to His children about their eternal security to arouse in them a peaceful rest about their eternal destination.
- But, since God our Father knows our frame is only dust and that we are moved with the wind of change, He has gone to the greatest of lengths to bring this assurance to us so that we may be joyful.
- **Assurance from the words of Jesus:**
- **John 5:24** “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”
 - *Has* eternal life...it is already a done deal for those who hear and believe Jesus’s Words.
- **John 6:37-40** “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. {38} For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. {39} This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. {40} For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”
 - Do you realize what Jesus is saying here?
 - It is His Father’s will for Him to lose none of the believers that come to Jesus. Not only that, but also to raise them up on the last day.
 - In other words, if Jesus were to lose anyone who has come to Him by faith, Jesus would be going against the will of His Father.
- **John 8:31-32** “So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’”

¹ Ryle, *Holiness*, 148.

- How do we know that we have been given to Jesus by God the Father? We believe what Jesus has said and we continue in His Word for our daily living.
- This is what it looks like on our side so that we can know that we are in Christ.
- **John 10:27-29** “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; {28} and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will 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 the Father's hand.”
 - Again, those who are Jesus’ sheep (**My sheep**) are going to follow Him. How do we know that we are Jesus’ sheep...because we follow Him.
 - By following Him, we are eternally secure, not because we follow Him but because by following Him we show that we are His sheep who can’t be snatched away.
- **John 15:8-11** “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11 These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”
 - Again, keeping the commands of Christ and bearing fruit for Him shows that we are eternally secure. Why would God do this for us...so that our joy would be full.
 - When we know that we are His sheep, we should be joyful.
- **Assurance from the Writings of the Apostle Paul:**
- **Romans 8:38-39** “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, {39} nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- **Philippians 1:6** “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”
- **Ephesians 1:13-14** “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, {14} who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.”
- **2 Timothy 1:12** “For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.
 - “Observe that he employs this phrase to denote eternal life; for hence we conclude, that our salvation is in the hand of God, in the same manner as there are in the hand of a depositary those things which we deliver to him to keep, relying on his fidelity. If our salvation depended on ourselves, to how

many dangers would it be continually exposed? But now it is well that, having been committed to such a guardian, it is out of all danger.”²

- **Assurance from the Writings of the Apostle John:**

- There are three tests that are commonly used from 1 John.
- ***The Doctrinal Test (do you believe what is true):***
- **1 John 4:2-3** “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; {3} and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.”
- **1 John 5:1** “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.”
- ***The Moral Test (do you live an obedient lifestyle):***
- **1 John 2:3-6** “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. {4} The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; {5} but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: {6} the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”
- **1 John 3:9-10** “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. {10} By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”
- ***The Social Test (do we love one another):***
- **1 John 3:14** “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.”
- **1 John 4:7-8** “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. {8} The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”
- **Assurance from the Writings of the Apostle Peter:**
- **1 Peter 1:23** “...for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.”
- **1 Peter 2:6** “For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."
- **1 Peter 1:3-5** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, {4} to

² Calvin and Pringle, *Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 201.

obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, {5} who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

- **1 Peter 5:10** “After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”
- The list of Scriptures could go on and on, but the overall point is that those who have been chosen by God, the Son died for and they respond to the gospel message and are forever in the hands of Jesus.

Evidences of Assurance³

- Again, we must remember that there is the objective truth about assurance, God has said that we are saved and that we are secure in His hands. There is also the subjective truth about our assurance, we should know ourselves from our experience that we are secure in God’s hands.
 - These are also found throughout 1 John.
 - **1 John 5:13** “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”
 - Again, God does not want you to be uninformed or have doubts. We can experience God’s assurance.
- 1) A true Christian enjoys fellowship with the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit.
 - **1 John 1:3** “...what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”
 - 2) The ministry of the Holy Spirit is active in the heart.
 - **1 John 3:24** “The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”
 - 3) Christians may gain assurance of salvation from answered prayer.
 - **1 John 3:22** “...and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.”
 - 4) The true citizen of heaven eagerly longs for Christ’s return.
 - **1 John 3:2-3** “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. {3} And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”
 - 5) Spiritual discernment is becoming more and more evident and even longed for in life.

³ The following list was taken from, MacArthur and, *Biblical Doctrine*, 650-653.

- **1 John 4:1** “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”
- 6) An acute awareness of the holiness of God and the guilt of one’s sin always accompanies genuine salvation.
 - **1 John 1:9** “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
- 7) The decreasing pattern of sin in one’s life.
 - **1 John 5:18** “We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.”
- 8) Then, as patterns of sin decrease, patterns of obedience increase.
 - **1 John 3:10** “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”
- 9) A growing rejection of the worldliness that dominates human life.
 - **1 John 2:15** “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”
- 10) The genuine Christian not only rejects the world but is also rejected *by* the world.
 - **1 John 3:13** “Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.”
- 11) Antithetical to the hatred of and rejection by the evil world system is a true believer’s love for fellow Christians.
 - **1 John 4:7** “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”

What about those who look like believers but don’t persevere?

- The warnings in the Bible are there for those who just want to look like a Christian but have never given their life over to Him.
- Our Christian walk is not based on saying the right prayer or even just believing the truth about Jesus.
 - **James 2:19** “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.”
- It is not even about recognizing and coming to Jesus.
 - **Mark 5:6-7** “When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. {7} And he cried out with a loud voice and said, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.”
- How does Jesus compare those who are truly born again with those who just act the part?
- **Matthew 7:21-23** “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. {22} “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord,

Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" {23} "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'"

- What does the lifestyle look like after the profession of faith?
- **Matthew 7:24** "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.
- Hearing the words of Jesus and then acting on them is key to knowing our place in God's kingdom.
- **1 John 2:19** "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us."
 - "John anticipates another objection, that the church seemed to have produced these pests and to have cherished them for a time. Certainly it serves more to disturb the weak when anyone among us, professing the true faith, falls away than when a thousand outsiders conspire against us. He then confesses that they had gone *out from* the heart of the church, but he denies that they were ever *of* the church. The way to remove this objection is to say that the church is always exposed to this evil, so that it is constrained to bear with many hypocrites who do not really know Christ, however much they may profess his name with their words."⁴

A RENEWED VIEW OF TRIALS

- Often times it is the trials in life which push someone one way or the other in their relationship with the Lord. Some see the trials as too much and take the off ramp, showing they were never born again. Others see them how the Bible defines them...there to strengthen our resolve and assurance in salvation.
- "Some people come to church, profess Christ, and even get baptized. Yet when trouble comes into their lives, they're gone. And they may never come back. Maybe they encountered a broken relationship, the death of a loved one, or some other struggle, and the circumstances seemed so overpowering to them that they blamed God and walked away, convinced that Christianity doesn't work."⁵
- Our perseverance through trials is proof of a living faith in Christ.
- **James 1:12** "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."
- Our trials push us towards Christ so that we do persevere. We should not look at trials as a burden but as the Lord's way of confirming our faith and confidence in our salvation.

⁴ Calvin and Matthew Henry, *1, 2, & 3 John*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 42.

⁵ John MacArthur Jr., *Saved without a Doubt*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 144.