Section: Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

Wednesday, December 2, 2020

Steven Obert

**TEACHING NOTES**

**Q94.** **Can a true Christian abandon or lose his/her salvation?**

No. Everyone who has been truly born again will persevere in saving faith forever by the power and work of the Holy Spirit. God will lose none of those He saves.

**Good evening**

**Intro and prayer**

I am going to start our night with a definition from the WoTC:

**Perseverance of the Saints:** God keeps His saved people forever. The elect are saved and eternally secure by God’s power and promise. Because of grace, God works so those whom He has chosen and given eternal salvation, by the power and work of the Holy Spirit, are enabled to persevere in faith forever. A person shows that he/she was truly saved by God by persevering in faith in Christ until the end.

The historic confession of faith says this on the perseverance of the saints.

**17:1. Those God has accepted in the Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, and given the precious faith of his elect can neither totally nor finally fall from a state of grace. They will certainly persevere in grace to the end and be eternally saved, because the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable. Therefore, he still brings about and nourishes in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit that lead to immortality. Even though many storms and floods arise and beat against them, yet these things will never be able to move the elect from the foundation and rock to which they are anchored by faith. The felt sight of the light and love of God may be clouded and obscured from them for a time through their unbelief and the temptations of Satan. Yet God is still the same; they will certainly be kept by the power of God for salvation, where they will enjoy their purchased possession. For they are engraved on the palms of his hands, and their names have been written in the book of life from all eternity.**

See this truth from scripture as a bedrock of confidence for those whom God has saved. Scripture speaks clearly to this truth as we’ll see in our lesson tonight, but it is so helpful to know that this is a blessed foundation for our hope and has been throughout history for the saints!

We could sum this entire catechism question up with this truth, **Those God has accepted in the Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, and given the precious faith of his elect can neither totally nor finally fall from a state of grace. They will certainly persevere in grace to the end and be eternally saved, because the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable.**

God is the one who began the work of salvation in you and He is the one who will complete it. You cannot lose your salvation because God, who cannot err, is the very One who caused your faith and salvation. God does not fail:

**Philippians 1:6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.**

This is why a right understanding of salvation is so important. A popular false teaching is that salvation depends upon the so-called “free will” of man, if this is true then scripture cannot make the claim that those who “are saved” will always “remain saved.” As it does in John 6 and 10:

**John 6:37-40 “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”**

We see clearly that God the Father has a chosen people whom He gives to God the Son. All of those chosen people will come to Jesus and Jesus will never cease to keep them. Jesus will raise those elect up on the last day.

Let’s look at John 10:

**John 10:27-30 “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 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. I and the Father are one.”**

In this passage, we see two of the persons of the triune Godhead working in unison to bring about salvation. The Father gives the Son a particular people for the Son’s possession, Jesus calls them and they will follow and Jesus gives them eternal life.

Jesus says I give them eternal life and they will never perish. They will never perish because no one will take them from me. God the Father who is greater than all has given them to me, He also holds them in His hand and no one will snatch them from Him. Now when this verse in John 10 ends with “I and the Father are one”, it should more literally be interpreted I and the Father we are one. This does not mean Jesus and the Father are the same person, it means in regards to the will and working of God, the persons of the triune Godhead are in complete unison. The Father and the Son are one in purpose, they are one in their eternal will.

Can a true Christian abandon or lose their salvation? Can you snatch a sheep from God’s hand? If God were not sovereign, then perhaps this answer could be different, however God is “greater than all” meaning He is sovereign and no one can take from God what is His. You must see here that if there was a “free will” in man to choose or reject salvation, then the scriptures and Jesus Himself could not make the claim that the sheep will never perish.

We see this clarification on the will of man again in chapter 7 of our confession:

**7:2. This perseverance of the saints does not depend on their own free will but on the unchangeableness of the decree of election, which flows from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father. It is based on the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ and union with him, the oath of God, the abiding of his Spirit, the seed of God within them,and the nature of the covenant of grace. The certainty and infallibility of their perseverance is based on all these things.**

Perseverance, like salvation, is not done by or credited to our will. If it were then we could not say that we have assurance that it would continue because the will of man is extremely fickle. Think of your day today and how often and easily your own feelings and thoughts have changed and adjusted. Christian you do not want you salvation to be based upon your “will” because it would not be a solid foundation!

However as the confession of faith says of perseverance: **It is based on the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ and union with him, the oath of God, the abiding of his Spirit, the seed of God within them,and the nature of the covenant of grace. The certainty and infallibility of their perseverance is based on all these things.**

With these clarities, let us also know that, while it is not our feeble will that we are depending on, at the same time, we must know that a true Christian would **never** truly desire to forsake God. No, in new birth God works is us, from that moment forward, a will that always remains in saving faith—a will that never desires to leave or lose God, even in times of struggle or doubts. Struggles and doubts that a true Christian may have are never so significant or powerful that they overcome a true Christian in the hand of God. Those that God has made alive in Jesus (those He has given saving faith to) will always remain in genuine, **willing** saving faith.

But, as we just clarified, the power in us for this perseverance is God at work in us. In the same way, the credit for our perseverance goes entirely to God, as the certainty and infallibility of our perseverance is based God at work in us.

Since we’ve looked at the Father and Son’s work in keeping those whom they save, let’s look at the role the Spirit plays in this perseverance.

As you know from our studies so far, especially last lesson, the Holy Spirit is perfectly united in the Trinity in the plan and work of salvation. In fact, Scripture commonly credits the particular work of perseverance to the Holy Spirit.

**Ephesians 1:13-14 In [Christ] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were *sealed* with the promised Holy Spirit, *who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it*, to the praise of his glory.**

**2Corinthians 1:21-22 And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his *seal* on us and given us his *Spirit* in our hearts *as a guarantee*.**

God the Father ensures the endurance of His elect by sealing them with God the Holy Spirit. This is the way God “holds” the believers in His hand. God the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the believer at the moment of regeneration (when they are born again). The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance as children of God until the future truth is made a reality-until we acquire possession of it. This is incredible, the triune God is always unified in the work of salvation, however each person of the triune God have distinct roles in salvation. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit keep the believer saved.

You see the Scriptures say that God the Father and God the Son hold the believer causing them to be safely saved, and the scriptures say that God the Holy Spirit dwells in the true believer sealing them and keeping them in the faith until their end. The triune God causes salvation and keeps the believer saved.

I already sound repetitive because I want us to see this truth clearly. God is the one who saves and therefore we cannot lose something we did not cause and empower in ourselves.

So why is there confusion when it comes to this truth? It seems like there are a lot of people who are believers but they eventually walk away from their faith. There also seems to be scriptures that speak to this walking away. So how do we understand these things?

Historically, consistent biblical theologians have affirmed, and we believe, that someone who denounces faith was never truly saved. They had a superficial faith. This truth is best seen in the parable of the seed:

**Matthew 13:1-9 & 18-23 1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2 And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. 3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, 6 but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 He who has ears, let him hear.”**

Jesus goes on to explain this parable to His disciples a few verses later:

**18 “Hear then the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. 20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”**

Some will hear and not understand at all, these will be snatched away (remember the sheep that belong to God cannot be snatched from His hand). Some will spring up quickly and claim to believe the truth they have heard, however when tribulation comes on account of this word that was believed, they will prove to have no root (they lack true saving faith), nothing to keep them grounded, and they fall away. The seed that falls in the thorns hears the word but is so in love with the world that the truth of the word is choked out of them like a weed chokes a plant and keeps the plant from bearing fruit, these too lack true saving faith.

However, those thrown in the good soil hear, understand, and bear fruit. Now this verse is often miss taught to say it is up to you and me to provide good soil. However, God is the Foundation and Grower of those He has chosen for salvation—that means He determines who is in “good soil”.

Notice, in this parable each seed that heard the word did not hear the wrong word, (our job to preach the gospel) however the soil they were in did not prove to be good and therefore they did not truly believe. When we understand that God is the one who saves, we will not see the soil as our work. We are commanded to proclaim the gospel, however we do not decide the soil. Our work is the general calling out of the true gospel. Now, notice nowhere in this parable did Jesus bring up false preaching, because quite practically there would be no possibility of salvation through a false presentation of the gospel. There is no need to bring it up here because no seed can take root in a false gospel.

Back to our question for the night, a true believer remains in Christ because God is the one who placed the true believer in Christ. He is the one who ensures good soil for seeds He chose to save. God never saved the person who claims faith but eventually walks away. Their so-called faith was superficial.

**1 Peter 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**

We see here again the cause of our faith was God, and therefore the securer of our faith is also God. Christian “by Gods power you are being guarded through faith for salvation!”

Praise God believer, since it was not up to you, but only up to Him, you cannot lose it either. Your will did not and cannot cause salvation or the loss of salvation. This is amazing. We are guarded by God, the very power of God is guarding us by grace through faith unto salvation!

Look at 2 Cor.1:21-22:

**2 Corinthians 1:21-22 And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.**

God seals us with His Spirit as a guarantee that He has and will save us. Our salvation is guaranteed by God. The reason scripture so clearly teaches that true believers will persevere is because God is the one who causes that perseverance.

Let’s look at one of my favorite passages on this very topic.

**Romans 8:38-39 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

The context from the earlier verse in Romans 8 leading up to this verse speaks about how a person is saved and what God does in and through a saved person. These verses are speaking not to humanity in general but specifically to those who God foreknew (lovingly chose from eternity) and predestined (destined to salvation before time began) 8:29. Now the clarity that comes in these verses is amazing. Paul speaking on behalf of God says that for the saved sinner, the genuine believer, nothing and I mean nothing can separate you from God’s love for you in His Son.

Can death separate you-no, life-no, how about angels or demons-no, what about things present around you or things you don’t even know are coming-no, what about spatial things height depth-no, and in just in case you are thinking of a category that wasn’t covered, God’s word is clear nothing that has been created can do this. Since God is the only uncreated thing Paul’s point here is very clear, nothing can separate us who are saved from God **not even our own selves.**

So what then do we do with verses that *seem* to say the opposite? Here is a good example of what I mean.

**Hebrews 6:4-6 4 For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.**

At quick glance, it seems that someone who has faith can lose it and lose it in a permanent sort of way. However in light of “tota scriptura,” all of scripture, we know that scripture confirms the opposite. When this happens we must look closer to see how this scripture can be understood and not contradict the other scriptures.

When we look closely these verses we see that they say nothing of regeneration (being born again) or saving faith (in fact it does not actually mention faith at all). Let’s do our homework here. Could someone who has been taught the true gospel and has a clear fleshly understanding of it, tasted the heavenly gift (experienced on the surface the goodness and work of God), shared in the Holy Spirit (does not mean the Spirit dwelled in them but rather they have seen the Spirit of God do mighty things), still be an unbeliever?

Yes, many people have been in this very position and walked away from these things because they were without saving faith. That is exactly what this verse is saying. We have all seen the man who goes into a good church….is committed to the church for a length of time….he sits through many sermons of gospel declaration and rich doctrine…he may mentally ascent to truth of the Bible, he might even declare a belief in Jesus…in his time in the church he gets to know the true saints who are filled with the Holy Spirit—he is loved, cared for, and served by the members and the elders…he sees the Lord working graciously and powerfully in the saints around him…he may even turn from some sinful ways in the form of repentance and make surface changes in his own life—maybe pays off debt, restores broken relationships, forgives past hurts, tries really hard in himself to obey God’s law……..but without being regenerated by God and having true saving faith in Jesus, all of this is merely a surface experience, it is not of a made-new heart—it is not from a made-new heart….and so the man falls away because the house of his life is actually built on the sand, not on the rock of Christ. This is called Apostasy. They appeared to be and claimed to be of God’s people, but they walked away at some point because they were actually **not**.

An unbeliever (an unregenerate) person can have all of those good experiences and intellectual knowledge of God’s truth even and prove they never truly loved Jesus. Why, because unless God causes regeneration and saving faith, they will only taste the good things but never truly love the Christ of the blessing and truth.

**Psalm 34:8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!**

**Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!**

You see what happened in the Hebrews passage is that the person tasted but never took refuge in the LORD. The person being spoken of had experienced in very real ways the glory and power, the hope and beauty, of gospel realities, and yet that person “fell away”. What cannot be true about these verses is that these things (some degree of enlightenment, witnessing the Holy Spirits work, tasting of God’s goodness and seeing hope in the word of God) are only true of a regenerated person. This would mean that someone truly given saving faith can lose his or her salvation and we know that is impossible. Those who taste and see that the LORD is good **and, by God’s effective saving grace,** take refuge in Him, they are saved and will remain that way.

Now, our passage says, “it is impossible … [in the case of actual apostates] … to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.”

Fleshing out this statement of impossibility isn’t the aim of our lesson tonight, nor do we have the time in this lesson to do so, therefore we won’t dive the whole depth that would be fitting for this portion of the passage. But, I do want to encourage you to not attempt to sit on the throne and call God or His word into question. He has wise and perfect reasons for ordaining things the way that He has. I want to encourage us all in a moment like this to examine ourselves. Are we truly taking God at His word? Are we agreeing with God, who is the sovereign King and pure Truth?

Now what’s additionally helpful for our consideration of focus tonight in Hebrews 6 is the illustration in the next few verses. We will see again, through this illustration, the use of fruit to identify the tree. A true believer is known by their fruit.

**Hebrews 6:7-8 7 For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. 8 But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.**

Land that receives these blessings but produces thorns and thistles, reveals by its fruit, that it is not land that God has saved. The “falling away” group is the land that produces thorns and thistles. However, the land that receives these blessings and produces a useful crop proves itself by its fruit to be land or people that are saved by God. Do you see the illustration here? **The evidence that these people were not truly saved is the very fact that they “fall away”.**

Notice both lands “drank the rain that often fell on them” meaning they both experienced various gifts from God. However only one produced good crops, while the other thorns and thistles. When we continue in this passage we will see a different people (from the Hebrews 6:4-6 people) being addressed just like the two lands in the illustration:

**Hebrews 6:9-10 9 Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. 10 For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.**

 We see an entirely different group of people here, this group is in contrast to the Hebrews 6:4-6 group. These are beloved (a name reserved for true believers) people who have better things, like salvation, that belong to them. Notice the clarity in this verse: the people spoken of here have salvation (something again that was not mentioned about the previous “fall away” people), they are beloved (God has an eternal love for them), and they produce a good fruit (namely love for the saints and for God).

You see the point here is not that a believer can lose salvation; rather this verse is showing us that the lasting, ongoing fruit is the evidence of those who are truly saved. There is a special emphasis to say that those who experience the goodness of God in a greater degree (though not a saving degree) and still reject Him, for them it is impossible to restore them to repentance.

We have here clearly two groups of people surrounding an illustration of what a believer produces and what an unbeliever produces. Those who experience or taste God’s kindness and temporal mercies and yet fall away prove that they are land that will only produce thorns and thistles in the end. However, those who are beloved and truly saved will produce a good crop, one that shows God their true love for Him through their service and love to the saints. In fact, we see the author give the reason for this section of scripture in the next few verses:

**Hebrews 6:11-12 11 And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**

The author says it is their desire that each believer show the same seriousness and zealousness to have full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be lazy or sluggish.

When we see people walk away from the faith with finality we can know confidently that they were never truly saved:

**1 John 2:19 19They 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 it might become plain that they all are not of us.**

This is why there is such gracious encouragement to us in these scriptures to not be sluggish but to strive with confidence in the work God has done in His beloved. Therefore, instead of being sluggish we want you to be imitators of those who, through faith (true believers) and patience, inherit the promises. The Hebrews passages are used to warn the hearers that you can experience some of the same mercies as the beloved but not truly be saved. The passage from 1st John reveals that when this happens those who walk away from the faith were never truly saved in the first place. This is not speaking of someone loosing genuine faith.

Now here is some much needed clarity. God does not want us to go around constantly worried that we are not a part of the elect.

Let me explain in two parts:

First, the Holy Spirit is the guarantee and seal for the true believer. We know that one of the main functions of the Spirit in the believer is sanctification. How do we know we are growing in our sanctification? Well we see it in the fruit that we bear. How do we bear fruit? We do it by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. So, you see those who are bearing fruit are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit which is the evidence. The Holy Spirit in us is the guarantee of our salvation. God wants you to be supremely confident that He has saved you. He says through His scriptures there are the things you can see to know and be confident that I am in you. So the first evidence that you have been saved is you have a genuine, personal, ongoing claim to saving faith in Christ alone and the work of the Spirit is evident in your life— real fruit is produced.

Second, these verses that warn about unbelievers show us the difference between the two lives lived out. They consistently speak of a desire for us to have assurance.

God, through the scriptures, warns us of the way our lives should not look, but does so in order to increase our confidence. These verses are not meant to keep us in a constant state of fear or doubt. These verses are meant to give us confidence that we are a part of the elect. Look at verse 11 of the Hebrews passage **(11 And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end)** see the language; we desire that you have full assurance of hope until the end. God uses the scriptures to show you what a non-believer looks like as compared to what a believer’s life looks like and gives the Spirit to the true believer in order that we could see the evidence to match the scriptures and have full assurance. God wants you to be confident, believer, in your salvation.

Because we are finite, God uses commands and warnings as a part of His divine plan to ensure our salvation. God uses these commands and warnings to encourage us forward in faith. God commands us in Philippians to work out our salvation:

**Philippians 2:12-13 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,  13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.**

Peter does the same in:

**1Peter 1:1-15: 1 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: 2 May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. 11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

God uses the scripture that talks about persevering as a means to keep you in the faith. We are called to work out our salvation, not because it’s up to us but because God is at work. If God is at work we should be at work.

We should strive, we should work hard, we should see what unbelievers do when they “fall away” and it should stir up in us a desire to work and prove ourselves to be saved or make our election sure. Notice the reason given for our striving in verse 5. The verse says, “for this very reason make every effort” for what reason? Well the reason given in verses 3-4; God has given the true believer all things needed for life and godliness. He called us (this is His effectual call) to His own glory and excellence. He has granted us His precious and very great promises. He through his promises will make us partakers of the divine nature (we will have eternal life with Him); He has freed us from the corruption of sinful desire. Because He has done this, we “make every effort”.

When we make every effort to the things of verses 5-7 virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. When these qualities are ours and we are growing in them verse 8 says they keep us from being ineffective or unfruitful in our knowledge of Jesus.

So work hard, strive, and the position and fruit of this work can be evidence for you that God has saved you and will keep you. Verse 9 says those who don’t practice these things are blind they have no future hope and cannot remember the past hope they should. Verse 10 then says so believers work hard! Do this work, practice these qualities and you will never fail. You can confirm your calling, you can be certain of your salvation. Again as I said earlier this work and the fruit it produces does not save you. It is the evidence that you have been saved that the Holy Spirit is in you causing sanctification (growth into Christlikeness). If the Spirit is not in you, you will not continue to grow. You will not remain in the faith to the finish.

However if God has saved you and sealed you with the Holy Spirit, then you will work out your salvation and make your election sure. While we contribute nothing to being saved or being kept saved—we must know that—you can have total confidence that you are beloved by God by doing what He has commanded you. This is why Jesus said if you love Me, you’ll obey my commandments. Only the born again, regenerate person will love and obey until the end—and this happens by God’s will and power. Some will appear to obey as these various passages show but they will not remain in belief and obedience.

So be confident and work out your salvation. When you are not being obedient let these teachings from Scripture motivate you to return to obedience. Repent of your sin and obey your Lord.

**The Holy Spirit is the one who keeps us and produces the fruit and obedience to God in us. One of the clearest ways that we can be confident of the Holy Spirit having taken up residence in us and sealed us in God is this: After we have trusted in Jesus Christ for our salvation and trusted in Him alone (not our works), then and only then when we have begun bearing the fruit of the Spirit and growing, this fruit is and can be very tangible evidence that our faith in Christ alone is genuine. Since you and I cannot see the Spiritual world around us nor the hearts of men, God has given us a physical evidence that we can look to in order to help our confidence in our faith. When you are sealed with the Spirit you will believe in Christ alone for salvation and you will produce fruit. This is why the Spirit is the guarantee of our faith/salvation. He the Holy Spirit gives us regeneration, then God gives us faith and causes us to produce the fruit that these scriptures have mentioned. God guarantees He will finish the work He started.**

Therefore, to wrap up tonight, we remain saved because salvation and perseverance in saving faith is the work of the eternal unchanging God. God started your salvation and will see it through to completion. At the same time, we are exhorted to make our salvation or election true. To work out our salvation. This again is not because it is up to us to save ourselves. I know I have already said this but it must be clear. We do this because God through the scriptures has commanded us to do this, if we love God we will obey His commandments. It is also comforting to see the fruit of the Holy Spirit being worked out in us. It gives us confidence that what we believe in our hearts is true. Can we, who have been saved, lose salvation? No. Can God cause us to keep salvation by warning us about unbelievers and what they do? Yes! That is a means He uses as a part of His sovereign plan to ensure that His beloved remain saved.

Practical application:

The perseverance of the Saints is a comforting truth of God. In seasons of doubt what are you looking at that causes you to wonder if you are truly saved? Are you seeing a lack of fruit? Perhaps the Spirit is reminding you to get to work. Are you seeing difficult circumstances? Perhaps the Spirit is using those circumstances to sanctify you and make your faith stronger. One thing remains constant, God does not change and He does not fail.

We see these truths in James chapter 1 verses 2-4:

2Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

And verse, 12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

And verses 16-17, 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

James says do not be scared in trials but grow from them. If God saved, you then remember that He will also sustain you. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of light, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

God cannot fail He will see you through. He will exhort you to obey, He will warn you what it looks like for an unbeliever to “fall away,” these are means He uses in order to keep you in the faith.

Perseverance of the Saints is only a true doctrine if salvation is God’s work. If it were up to your own will then you would always have that same authoritative will that could change and stop believing. Praise God He did not leave this up to us. I can hardly make it through my morning routine without changing my mind, how much worse would I be if my very salvation were up to me. You guys should see this pattern by now too, many of these doctrinal truths in our catechism have a unique connection to others. When you misunderstand a doctrine, it will lead you to many misunderstandings. That is why we take this so serious and are being so thorough. My hope for you is that our repetition of certain truths is not overwhelming but reassuring.

These same truths come up repeatedly because they are such a foundation to the other truths we have been covering. God is sovereign in all things including salvation, therefore you, the true believer, will be saved by the sovereign God. He is unchanging, unstopping, without err, and He cannot fail. Praise God.

Can a true Christian abandon or lose his/her salvation? No. Everyone who has been truly born again will persevere in saving faith forever by the power and work of the Holy Spirit. God will lose none of those He saves.

Let’s pray.