**Grace to You** :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

**The Perseverance of the Saints, Part 2**
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-271

We are in a bit of a brief study on the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. And we sort of picked up on this doctrine because the study in the marvelous epistle of Jude and this little epistle, as you will remember that we've been studying on Sunday nights, ends with this great benediction. "Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to make you stand in the presence of his glory, blameless with great joy." That is a statement of the security of our salvation. Our Lord is able to keep us and to present us. This was so important for us as we were going through it that I wanted to enrich our study of just that passage. And so last week, and again this week, and perhaps one other session next week, we will look at this very, very important doctrine.

Now if you've been with us the last couple of weeks, we've sort of laid a lot of ground work for this, and I won't go back over that. I would commend the whole series to you as truth that is among the most encouraging, the most assuring, the most comforting, the most hope-producing of all biblical truth. The guarantee of scripture and therefore the promise of God is that salvation is forever. And this is not a stand-alone doctrine. This is not one that you can believe or not believe without any major effect on other doctrines. In fact, quite the opposite is true.

To get this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints or the eternality of salvation wrong is to produce chaos in regard to the doctrine of predestination, the doctrine of election, the doctrine of justification, the doctrine of sanctification, and the doctrine of glorification. It is, if you will, to unravel all the strands in the cord of salvation. That's why I said at the outset that the most important element in all the range of salvation doctrines is this issue of the perseverance of the saints. It is, in the end, what makes salvation salvation because it is forever.

And I know, as you do, it has been debated as if it's sort of a, I guess, difficult doctrine to come to a conclusion about, as if the scripture took both sides and was unclear, or if it was just sort of a matter of personal preference. The fact of the matter is it is an absolutely critical component in the entire understanding of salvation. And there are so many passages of scripture that relate to this that we could draw this study out perhaps longer than we need to. Suffice it to say, in a few weeks I can anchor you down, I think, so strongly that as you study the Bible in the future you're going to see those passages that relate to this, and you're going to be able to answer those passages that perhaps once troubled you with regard to this issue.

I was thinking as I began to prepare for tonight of Matthew chapter 18 - just one of many texts which weighs in on this issue. In Matthew 18:12, Jesus says, “What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. Thus not *the* will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.” And “little ones” in this chapter means believers. Back to verse 6. These little ones are those who believe in me. “It is not your Father’s will that one of these little ones - ” who believes in him “ - that one believer would perish.”

Now, our Lord affirmed that promise in another important text, John chapter 10. And I’ll show you just two texts in the gospel of John, by way of foundation here. In John 10:27, Jesus says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them.” And the word “know” has to mean more than “I know who they are” because that would be true of anybody and everybody. To “know” them means to “have an intimate and personal relationship with them.” “I know them, and they follow Me, and I give eternal life to them and they shall never perish.”

Jesus said it is not the will of my Father that anyone of these little ones should perish and here he says they shall never perish. “And no one shall 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.” We are held in the secure hands of the Father and the Son.

In the 17th chapter of John, in that marvelous High Priestly prayer to which we referred in earlier studies, verse 11 Jesus says, “I am no more in the world; - ” he knows that he’s going to the cross, and his ministry here is over. “ - and *yet* they themselves are in the world, - ” referring to those who belong to him, “ - And I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name, *the name* which thou hast given me that they may be one even as we are.”

Father, I’m going to go through the cross. I’m going to be bearing sin. Keep them and bring them into that eternal oneness that you have prepared for them. Verse 12. “While I was with them, I was keeping them in thy name which thou hast given me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished, only the son of perdition - ” Judas “ - that the scripture might be fulfilled.” And, of course, he was a devil from the beginning and never a true believer.

It’s not the Father’s will that they perish. Jesus follows that up by saying, “And none of them will ever perish.” And he says, “I have guarded them to make sure that they won’t perish and now, Father, I commit them to you. You guard them so that not one of them will perish.” In verse 15 he says, "I do not ask thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil *one.”* The one who would steal their souls, seal their faith, steal their salvation, if it were possible.

By such statements and many, many more, we are to be confident that those who are genuinely the children of God through faith in Christ are secure in that relationship forever and will never perish. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will never perish. Salvation is the gift of eternal life and those who receive it will never lose it, or forfeit it.

And that is so essential to understanding salvation that it really does boggle the mind that it would ever be open to question. And yet there are many, many Christians, many of you, who have been denied the sweetness of that confidence, who have been denied the joy of that confidence, who have been denied the peace of that confidence, the hope of that confidence, the assurance of that confidence, the rest, the tranquility that that confidence brings.

So many have been told that they will be lost unless they hold on to their confession, unless they hold on to their faith, unless they hold on and keep on believing on their own. And I told you in our first message two weeks ago that if I could lose my salvation, I would lose it. If I was in charge of it and I had to hold on, I wouldn't, because I couldn't. I couldn't produce my salvation by an act of my own faith and I couldn't sustain it that way, either.

It's a terrible thing to say to people, "You have to hold on." Well, how tightly do you have to hold on? Well, you have to live righteously. Well, how righteously do you have to live? And so, people are caught in this idea of doubt, and fear, and unnecessary anxiety, wondering how far they can go in sin and still not lose it, or how much they can doubt and still not have a non-saving faith.

This is a rejection of the very clear nature of salvation, the very clear promise of God. So it is a sin in the sense that it under-appreciates what God has done. It diminishes gratitude because it diminishes understanding, and in diminishing gratitude, it diminishes worship.

And it is interesting to me that in the historic Pentecostal Charismatic churches there is a denial of the eternality of salvation. There is a denial of the perseverance of the saints. There is a denial of the doctrine of security, which has to diminish their understanding of salvation, which then has to diminish their understanding of justification, sanctification, election. It therefore diminishes God. It diminishes their gratitude to God, the joy that they should have. And yet it's so interesting to me that their level of emotion transcends the level of emotion of people who understand that doctrine, which almost makes you feel like they're trying to convince themselves that everything is okay against their real instinct.

Because we are to receive with full joy, and full gratitude all that God has given us. And because we are to respond with full praise, and full worship, all the promises of God, and give him glory for them all, we must be clear on this, the most gracious pledge in the doctrine of salvation.

Now, I understand that the doctrine of justification is the great sort of noble head of all the doctrines of salvation, and I understand the wonder of the doctrine of reconciliation, and redemption, and ransom,

and adoption, and conversion, and regeneration. I understand all those terms and all of that, but in the end, what makes all of those have such infinite value and produce such lasting joy is that they are all forever. As soon as you pull that out, you've diminished everything. And as I said last week, any idea of salvation that leaves out security is a distortion of the truth. And any idea of security that leaves out perseverance is a distortion of the truth.

So if you've ever been saved, you can never be lost. But if you have been saved, you're not going to live a life that presumes on that - that so often people assume - and go out and sin any way you want because you can't lose your salvation, because if you've truly been converted, you love the law of God, you long to obey Christ, and that's how you're going to live. And consequently, your faith is a persevering faith.

We are secure in our salvation by the gift of God of a faith that perseveres. He doesn't just give us the faith to save us as a supernatural gift, and then remove it. So now we're stuck trying to generate our own faith to hold on to salvation on our own. He gives us a faith as a permanent gift that perseveres. That's why instead of talking about eternal security which states a truth but doesn't tell us how, we would rather talk about the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, meaning that we have a faith that never turns to doubt so severe as to become unbelief.

We have our moments of doubt. We have our struggles. But never does our faith turn to final doubt, complete doubt and denial. We are secured by the same supernatural faith that was given to us to cause us to believe savingly, and we are sustained by the gift of that same supernatural faith. Salvation can't fail because the faith can't fail, the faith that's come to us from God.

Now, tonight, in order to see this, I want you to turn to 1 Peter chapter 1. We just sort of introduced that last time and I want to work our way through it tonight. 1 Peter 1:3-9. And my hope is that we can work our way all through these verses. Now, this marvelous epistle begins with the doctrine of election. In verse 1, we are chosen. It then moves to the sanctifying work of the Spirit, obedience to Christ, being sprinkled with his blood.

And so, it is clearly an epistle directed at the elect, those who have been sanctified by the Spirit, through justification, unto glorification. And he comes into verse 3 and starts to unfold the blessing of this salvation, which began in eternity past with election, and was realized in time through the sanctifying work of the Spirit in our lives, that produce submission to the Lordship of Christ. And I want you to notice where he starts. It's as if Peter says, "I acknowledge that you are the elect. I acknowledge that you are those whom God has chosen and whom the Spirit has set apart from sin to God. I acknowledge that you are those who obey Jesus Christ. I acknowledge that you have received grace and peace in fullest measure."

And immediately he says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And he could have said, “For the doctrine of election, for the truth of justification, for the truth of sanctification, for the truth of glorification, for our redemption, for our regeneration,” any of those glorious terms. But notice what he says. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ - ” This is a doxology. This is a benediction in response to our salvation.

“ - 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, to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you - ” and here comes the key statement “ - who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice - ” What do you rejoice in? You rejoice in the fact that you have a living hope, that you have an inheritance that can’t perish, and can’t be defiled, and can’t fade away, that is now reserved in heaven for you, and that you are protected by the power of God through faith.

“It’s in this that you rejoice and even though now for a little while, if necessary, you’ve been distressed by various trials. They’re the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen him, you love him. And though you do not see him now but believe in him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”

Peter says, “Look, the thing that produces the joy, the thing in which you greatly rejoice, the thing that causes you to praise and glorify and honor God, the thing that fills you with joy inexpressible and full of glory is that the end result of your faith is the full and final salvation reserved for you at the coming of Jesus Christ, at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” This is the whole point. This is the passage as much as any in the scripture that tells me how at the heart of all matters of salvation is this issue of perseverance. The key phrase for you to underline would be in verse 5. “Who are protected by the power of God.”

Now, verse 1 tells us that Peter was writing to aliens. That is to say, Christians living in the world and they are aliens, as we are in this world. Christians, believers who are the elect, who have been sanctified by the Spirit, that includes their salvation and ongoing sanctification, those who are obeying Christ, having been sprinkled with his blood, that is in a sense having made a covenant obedience with him.

And he writes to these scattered believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia. Those are all Gentile parts of the world. And he’s writing to believers who are not just scattered, but they’re feeling some serious persecution. In chapter 2, in chapter 3, in chapter 4, and even to some degree in chapter 5 references are made to their suffering. So, Peter is writing to scattered believers in Asia Minor, which is modern Turkey. They are facing severe persecution. In some cases they’re facing

death, martyrdom. And these believers have a natural fear for their own lives and a fear for their own faithfulness.

Now remember that they don't have a Bible. They don't have the scripture. They don't necessarily know the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, so they have to be instructed. Put yourself in their place. You've come to Christ. You're in a Gentile world. You only know the gospel that you heard and whatever else you've been instructed in, and you're at best a neophyte. You're new. And you feel the heat of the world around you, and the pressure of the world around you, and you also now feel the escalating hostility toward the faith, and you see others being persecuted, and perhaps some being martyred. And you wonder if your faith could stand that test.

That's not too far fetched, is it? I suppose you've asked yourself that question. I've asked myself that question through my life. What would I do if I were standing there before the stake or if I were standing there before the guillotine to put my head in to have it chopped off, what would I do? What would I do if I was to be tortured in some horrific way? With all that I know, I believe at this particular point that the Spirit of God would accomplish his work in me and I would stand the test and pass the test. But if I didn't have what the Word of God has to say about that, and I was just kind of hanging on to my own ability to take that severe test, I might begin to wonder whether I'd ever pass the test.

And so, here you have these new believers and very normal for them not to trust their own faith, not to trust their own strength. And they are aliens in the world. They are citizens of heaven. Peter calls them a royal priesthood, living stones in God's temple, a people of God's own possessions. They belong to him. And one thing for sure, they do not need to fear. They do not need to be intimidated. They do not need to be troubled by persecution. They never need to be afraid that their faith will fail when it comes to the test.

In fact, in verse 7 he says, "When various trials come - " verse 6 " - they become the proof of your faith, which is more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, and may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." In other words, what he says to them is, "when you come to the test and you come to the fire, your real faith will prove itself." It's just the opposite of what you think. You have been given a kind of faith that shines in the fire. In verse 5, you are "protected by the power of God through faith." In verse 8, no matter what is going on, you "believe in him." In verse 9, the "outcome of your faith is the salvation of your soul."

That's what we're talking about. It's the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Or another way to say it is "persevering faith, faith that perseveres." They were protected by the power of God through the faith that he gave them. You don't have to say to people, "Well, if you can keep on believing, you can keep on being saved." I couldn't be saved by my own faith. I can't be kept by my own faith. That's why I said if I could fall, I would fall. But I can't fall because I have a faith that's a gift of God.

The issue is very similar in Jude, and I'm sure that the teaching from Jude is vivid in your mind. "Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, a brother of James to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father and kept - " and kept " - for Jesus Christ."

Now, these people to whom Jude wrote had a lot to fear because they were in a world of false teaching, and they were being told to go and reach those who were in false religious systems. And it was dangerous work, as it says in verse 23, you're "snatching people out of the fire" and you have to do this "with fear, hating the garment polluted by the flesh." You get near to false doctrine, you can get polluted by it. Maybe they were wondering, "Can we go into that world of false doctrine and come out unpolluted?" And that's why he says at the end of Jude, "Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling." You are the chosen, and you are the kept, and you will not fall.

If Peter believed - and if it were true - that believers could lose their salvation, he would have to say something very different than this. If believers were there worried about whether they would survive persecution, worried whether they would survive martyrdom, worried whether their faith would hold on, and it really was up to them, Peter would have written this letter very differently. "Hang on, folks. Hold on. Don't abandon the faith. Be faithful. Be true." Instead he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's all in his hands, the one who chose you, who foreknew you, who sanctified you, who gave you grace and peace in fullest measure. It's all in his hands, and according to his great mercy he has regenerated you to a hope that ever lives, to an inheritance that can never fade away. You are protected by the power of God through faith," et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

If this had depended on them, you couldn't say all that. But Peter doesn't give them doses of sympathy, "Oh, I understand. Well, hold on. Hold on." He doesn't indicate that their fears are legitimate, but he points, rather, to their absolute safety. They might lose all their earthly possessions and their lives, but never their salvation. Their heavenly inheritance is fixed and guaranteed by God. And their faith will endure through anything and everything because that faith is not natural faith. It's a gift from God. It's supernatural. And their love for Christ wills stand against all assaults and never ever fail.

Look at the word "protected" for a minute in verse 5. It's a strong word, *phrouroumenous*. *Phrouroumenous*. A military term. It indicates being guarded by soldiers, present tense, constantly under guard by a powerful, protective force. Those who belong to God are perpetually guarded from all enemies until the war is over and the victory is complete. "Protected - " back to verse 5 " - by the power of God - " through faith " - for a salvation to be revealed."

We often say, "Well, I was saved 20 years ago. I was saved 2 years ago. I was saved 3 months ago." That's true. It would be just as true to say, "I am nearer to my salvation than I've ever been." It is true. I was saved from the penalty of sin in the past when I believed and the righteousness of Christ was

imputed to me and my sin imputed to him. I have been saved. It is also true to say, “I am being saved. I was saved from the penalty of sin. I am being saved currently from the power of sin, which no longer has dominion over me. But there is an element of my salvation that hasn’t taken place yet, and so I am nearer to my salvation than I’ve ever been. I will be saved from the very presence of sin.”

The salvation that the Lord determined before the foundation of the world to give me is not complete until that last element is fulfilled. He doesn’t start saving people and then stop. Paul says, “I’m confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will - ” what? “ - complete it.” We have been and are being protected for a salvation yet to be revealed. I don’t know how much stronger you could say it than that. Protected by what? By the power of God. By what means? Through faith, for that salvation that is our final glory.

Let me just kind of take apart this passage for you, and I won’t give you a lot of detail, but I want you to understand it because it’s so wonderful. I’m going to show you six ways we’re protected. Six ways. And I’ve already basically summarized them to you, but I’m going to pull it apart a little bit. Six ways that we are protected.

Number one. We are protected through a living hope. Six ways we know we’re protected through it. One is a living hope. Verse 3. “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.”

Now, we have been born again. We have been regenerated. We have been given new life. It is the life of God. It is eternal life, which is not a duration of life, but a kind of life. It is the life of God in us. We have been regenerated into this new life. And in this new life, we experience as a part of that life a living hope. Everything in our new life is supernaturally and spiritually alive. Our joy is a living joy, our peace is a living peace, and our hope is a living hope. What does that mean? It’s the opposite of one that dies. It can’t die. We do not have a hope that dies, but a hope that lives.

In verse 13 of this same chapter. “Gird your minds for action, keep sober *in your spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Stop worrying about whether you’re going to survive the suffering. Stop worrying about whether you can stand before the tribunal of men and maintain your faith and your testimony for Jesus Christ in that hour. Stop fearing that, and start fixing your hope on the grace that it will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Live in hope. This is a hope that cannot die because this is a life that cannot die.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:16. 2:16. “Now, may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God the Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts.” When you live in this world, you’re not supposed to live with fear, anxiety, panic, worry that the devil’s going to take your salvation, or somehow you’re going to lose it. God doesn’t want you to live that

way. He loves you, and he's given you eternal comfort and good hope by grace. So comfort and strengthen your hearts with that.

In Romans chapter 5, the opening few verses of that chapter celebrate this hope. We have "been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand;" We now stand in grace and grace covers all our sins. And, he says, "we rejoice in hope." In verse 5 he says, "Hope does not disappoint." The Lord didn't give you a hope that can die. He gave you a living hope.

Colossians 1:3, Paul says, "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven." We give thanks to God for you because you have an eternal hope, a hope that always lives and never dies.

Titus chapter 1:1. It's so wonderful. "Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, - " listen to this " - in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised - " and the next phrase, " - before time began." Before you ever lived, before there ever was a creation, God promised eternal life, and he cannot lie. In Titus 2:13. We are "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus."

Folks, we are protected by that living hope. In contrast to human hopes that fade and die, this hope cannot fade, cannot die, cannot disappoint. Hebrews 6:19 says, "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both steadfast and sure." Our hope can't die because our faith can't fail.

Now notice, again, back to what Peter says. Verse 3, we have a "living hope secured through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." All our eternal life is secured by his conquering death. But notice verse 4. "To *obtain* - " and this is our hope, " - an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."

I just love the fact that the writer will not just make one statement, but wants to make four for those doubters out there. It would be enough to say, "You have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to obtain an inheritance," okay? If I'm going to receive an inheritance, that's enough for me. But he adds, "which is imperishable," in case you wonder. And if you're still wondering, "undefiled." And if you're still wondering, "it won't fade away." And if you're still wondering, "It's reserved there for you."

I mean, you run out of but, but, but, but, buts. We're guaranteed an inheritance, imperishable, *aphthartos*, not liable to corruption, not liable to pass away. And the word can mean "not able to be plundered by an enemy." "No one can snatch them out of my hand - " it's that John 10 passage. Or

it’s that Romans 8 passage, “Who could bring a charge against God’s elect that would stick?” God’s already justified us.

Our inheritance can’t be plundered, it can’t be stolen by any enemy, by Satan, demons. It is eternal, it is indestructible, it is protected by God. And then he adds the word “undefiled,” *amiantos*, unstained, not subject to defect, not capable of failure. And then he adds *amarantos*, will not fade away, can’t diminish. Every way he can say it, he says it.

We’ve all been exposed to Greece lately with the Olympic Games over there and fascinating look at human life, to be sure. On one of the islands of Greece, some years ago workmen were making excavations in an ancient subterranean tomb area. They came upon a really magnificent marble sarcophagus, which is where they put dead bodies in ancient times. An inscription in Greek, according to a historian, informed the workman that here was interred the body of Chrysohoe, the golden-haired only daughter of Sopyrus, King of Milo.

When the lid was removed and a gleam of the lights shone within, a sight was disclosed that thrilled the spectators with wonder and awe. There lay in this sealed sarcophagus - now unsealed - the embalmed princess, dressed in gorgeous robes and adorned with antique-shaped jewels. It was reported that she had long, luxuriant hair, tied together by a golden circlet forming a flowing frame for her face and sides.

After a sleep of nearly 3,000 years, she looked as fresh and fair as if she had been buried only a few days earlier. But the writer says, “While the enraptured spectators gazed with bated breadth at the exquisite sight, fresh air entered the sarcophagus. All at once the lovely vision collapsed and crumbled into ashes. Nothing remained in the cold marbled tomb but a handful of ashes mingled with jewels.”

This is how it is with earthly beauty and earthly joy. It all crumbles away. But not our heavenly inheritance. Everything in this life is subject to corruption. Everything in this life is subject to decay, it is subject to fading. But our salvation is incorruptible, undefiled, unfading. Why? Because it is not a part of this world. It is not human. And he says that. Go back. “It is reserved in heaven for you.”

And because it’s there, it’s not corruptible, it’s beyond corruption, it’s outside of the capability of corruption. It’s reserved in heaven for you, and in heaven there is no corruption, right?

And that verb, “it is reserved,” perfect passive participle from *tre*, to “keep or to guard.” Perfect passive means it has been and continues to be protected there in the safest place in the universe, heaven. And you remember the words of Jesus that we quoted this morning? “Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal. But lay up your treasure in heaven, where moth and rust does not corrupt, and thieves to not

break through and steal." The safest place in the universe is heaven, right? That's where your eternal inheritance is reserved.

And it is protected there to be revealed at the last time. Look at verse 5. "For a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." A salvation that's ready, *hetoimos*, means "at hand, present, prepared." 2 Corinthians 10:16 is translated "That which has been accomplished." It's already done. When Jesus said in John 14, "I go to prepare a place for you," what was he saying? "And I hope you'll show up or I'll have to rent it out to somebody else?" If he's going to prepare a place for you, he says, "I'll come again and I'll get you, and there won't be anybody else in your place but you, because I'm preparing it for you."

We are protected until the salvation yet to be revealed in the last time, when we come face-to-face with the Lord, either through death or his coming, to receive the inheritance that now at this moment already is at hand in its place, already prepared waiting our arrival. And there aren't going to be a lot of vacant rooms in the Father's house, because the folks for whom they were prepared didn't show up.

"Protected" is a military term and the verb tense speaks of continuous action, always being protected, always being protected. And protected through faith. Underline that. That's the key. That's why we talk about the perseverance of the saints, because if you're truly saved, you have a faith that lasts. Takes you back to 1 John 2:19. "They went out from us because they were not of us. If they had been of us, they would have continued with us. They went out from us that it might be made manifest they were not all of us."

The point is this. You say, "Well, what about the person who believes for a while and goes away?" That was human faith, that wasn't the gift of faith from God. They never were genuinely saved. If they were genuinely saved, if they genuinely came to Christ, if they genuinely repented and believed, if they genuinely were given that gift of saving faith, if they truly and honestly opened their heart to that gift from the Lord, that gift would be there to the end. Our continued faith in Jesus Christ is the instrument by which God protects us.

So, as you look at this idea of protection, we are protected by means of a living hope, or we experience that protection, the reality of that protection through our living hope. And secondly, as we pointed out in verse 5, we are protected by God's own power. We are protected by a hope that cannot die, and we are protected by a power that cannot fail. A power that cannot fail.

God's power is limitless. God's power is sovereign. God's power is supreme. God's power can never ever fail. You could go through scripture after scripture - I won't take the time to do that. You're always so patient with me, and last Sunday night I went long so I'm going to be short tonight to try and make up for it, occasionally. But the Bible is pretty clear about the power of God. But if you're

wondering about the power of God, you might just remember that he created the universe. That sort of would be enough to cover the discussion. And if you're still wondering, he created the universe out of nothing. If you still wonder how much power he has, he created the universe by speaking it into existence. And if you're still wondering, he created the universe by speaking it into existence in full maturity. And if you're still wondering, he spoke it into existence in full maturity in six days, and he could have done it in six milliseconds, but he established a pattern of life for us with the idea of a week.

This is our great and powerful God. Not only did he create the universe, but he upholds the universe, he sustains the universe, he keeps it together. When Einstein comes to the end of his life and says, "After all my studies and all my discoveries," he said, in effect, he said not in exact words, "I die disillusioned and incomplete because I never could find what is the power that holds it all together." It's fine to understand the atom. It's fine to understand what the components of the atom do. It's fine to get down to the most minutest elements of existence of matter and energy, but in the end he couldn't discover what it was. And because of that there was great disillusionment.

What it is is simply the power of God. The power of God. And it is that same power that keeps us. And the means he uses to keep us is by giving us a faith that does not die. And if there was a time when you believed and now you don't, if there was a time when you had interest in Christ and now you don't, if you are indifferent to the Lord at all, if you don't have a hunger and thirst for him, if you don't have a desire for his Word, if you don't love him and long to serve him, if you don't want to know him, if you don't have a sustained trust and confidence in him, if you don't live your life in the hope of eternal glory, then whatever you may or may not have done in the past, you're not a Christian. You're not a Christian.

Because Christians live by faith, an enduring sustained faith. It's not apart from our wills. It's in perfect harmony with our wills. We remain steadfast, but not passive. We are active in persevering. We are pursuing Christ with all our might. We are pursuing obedience. We are longing for it, desiring it. We hate sin. We love righteousness. We are active in this process of persevering. That's why we can call it persevering.

It is a kind of faith that captures our minds, and captures our souls, and makes them enamored with Christ, and in love with his Word, and in love with his law, and desiring to serve him. All our being, everything in us, reaches out to honor Christ, and we live in a kind of state of grief because we do what we don't want to do and don't do what we ought to do, and we find ourselves - in Romans 7 - sick of our own remaining sin.

So, Peter says, "You are worried about whether your faith will endure these terrible severe tests? Don't worry. Don't worry." As Jesus said - and we studied this just last week - "When they take you before the synagogue and before the authorities and the kings, don't be anxious, the Holy Spirit will

show you what you should say." And you'll say what you should say, and you'll stand and give your testimony to Jesus Christ in the worst possible situation because that's the gift of faith that you've been given by God, sustained by the Holy Spirit.

So we are protected, protected by a living hope, protected by divine power, a faith that is a gift from God. But it is an active faith, not a passive one. It is an aggressive faith, not a weak one. It is a pursuing faith, not a fleeing one. And we are eager for the salvation that is ready for us to be revealed in the last time. There are four more of these means or experiences by which we know divine protection. We'll cover those four next Sunday. Let's pray.

Lord, there's so much here and it's so incredibly rich, so encouraging to us that we feel that if anything, we want to slow down and savor every thought. We aren't worthy to be saved. We aren't worthy to be kept. We are worthy of nothing. And we ask, O God, that you would make us grateful, forgive us for ever doubting your eternal gift. Forgive us for whatever kind of diminished worship arose out of a failure to understand that. Forgive us for not honoring you as you should be honored, for such an immense, enduring gift of mercy and grace to us.

And we worship you, we love you, we honor you, and we adore you for our salvation. And we know that as we live our lives in this world, we are constantly desiring to honor you, and yet constantly aware that it is grace that keeps us because we are so unworthy. We thank you for this great grace. We look forward to the salvation to be revealed at the last time. We thank you for enduring faith, and may we persevere with all our strength and devotion and commitment. As Paul put it, pressing toward the mark of Christ's likeness, for this demonstrates our love for the one who gave his life for us, and we pray in his name. Amen.

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