
Perseverance

J.C. Ryle

FROM THE INHERITANCE OF OUR FATHERS
— Series XXXIII, No. 1

JOHN CHARLES RYLE

John Charles Ryle (1816-1900) was educated at Eton and at Christ Church, Oxford where his career was unusually distinguished.

His first serious conviction came soon after he left Eton when his friend, Algernon Coote, rebuked him for swearing. Two years went by. Then in midsummer 1837, not long before his final examinations, he fell ill with severe chest inflammation. "That was the time," he wrote, "when I distinctly remember that I began to read my Bible and pray." He entered church one Sunday after the service had begun. Ephesians 2:8-9 was read and applied to his soul with particular emphasis. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." In due time, Ryle came to love the doctrines of free grace.

Ryle became curate of Exbury, Hampshire, 1841; rector of St. Thomas, Winchester, 1843; of Helmingham, Suffolk, 1844; vicar of Stradbroke, Suffolk, 1861; rural dean of Hoxne, 1869; honorary canon of Norwich, 1872; select preacher at Cambridge, 1873-74; at Oxford, 1874-76, 1879, 1880; dean designate of Salisbury, 1880; and bishop of Liverpool, 1880-1900.

Ryle marked out a conservative Calvinistic path for evangelical churchmen in days when much of the Church of England was drifting on the tides of liberalism or tractarianism. His successor at Liverpool, F.J. Chavasse, summed him up strikingly: "A man of granite with the heart of a child."

Perseverance

(Abridged)

"They shall never perish."

—John 10:28

I approach the subject of perseverance with diffidence, because I know it is one on which holy men do not see alike. But God is my witness, that in writing this, I have no desire to promote any cause but that of scriptural truth. In pleading for perseverance, I can say with a good conscience that I firmly believe I am pleading for an important part of the gospel of Christ. May God the Spirit guide both writer and reader into all truth. May that blessed day soon come when all shall know the Lord perfectly, and differences and divisions pass away for ever.

I. I will explain *what the doctrine of perseverance means.*

II. I will point out *some reasons why many reject the doctrine.*

III. I will mention *some reasons why the doctrine is of great practical importance.*

I. I will first explain *what I mean by the doctrine of perseverance.*

It is of the utmost importance to make this point clear. It is the very foundation of the subject. It lies at the threshold of the whole argument. In all discussions of disputed points in theology, it is impossible to be too accurate in defining terms. Half the abuse which has unhappily been poured on perseverance, has arisen from a thorough misunderstanding of the doctrine in question. Its adversaries have fought with phantoms of their own creation, and spent their strength in beating the air.

When I speak of the doctrine of perseverance, I mean this. I say that the Bible teaches that true believers, real genuine Christians, shall persevere in their religion to the end of their lives. They shall never perish. They shall never be lost. They shall never be cast away. Once in Christ, they shall always be in Christ. Once made children of God by adoption and grace, they

shall never cease to be His children and become children of the devil. Once endued with the grace of the Spirit, that grace shall never be taken from them. Once pardoned and forgiven, they shall never be deprived of their pardon. Once joined to Christ by living faith, their union shall never be broken off. Once called by God into the narrow way that leads to life, they shall never be allowed to fall into hell. In a word, every man, woman, and child on earth that receives saving grace shall sooner or later receive eternal glory. Every soul that is once justified and washed in Christ's blood shall at length be found safe at Christ's right hand in the day of judgment.

Such statements as this sound tremendously strong. I know that well. But I am not going to leave the subject here; I must dwell upon it a little longer. I desire to clear the doctrine I am defending from the cloud of misrepresentation by which many darken it. I want men to see it in its own proper dress — not as it is portrayed by the hand of ignorance and prejudice, but as it is set forth in the Scripture of truth.

(a) Perseverance is *a doctrine with which the ungodly and worldly have nothing to do*. It does not belong to that vast multitude who have neither knowledge, thought, faith, fear, nor anything else of Christianity except the name. It is not true of them, that they will “never perish.” On the contrary, except they repent, they will come to a miserable end.

(b) Perseverance is *a doctrine with which hypocrites and false professors have nothing to do*. It does not belong to those unhappy people whose religion consists in talk, words, and a form of godliness, while their hearts are destitute of the grace of the Spirit. It is not true of them that they will “never perish.” On the contrary, except they repent, they will be lost for ever.

(c) Perseverance is *the peculiar privilege of real, true spiritual Christians*. It belongs to the sheep of Christ who hear His voice and follow Him. It belongs to those who are “washed, and justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 6:11). It belongs to those who repent, and believe in Christ,

and live holy lives. It belongs to those who have been born again, converted, and made new creatures by the Holy Ghost. It belongs to those who are of a broken and contrite heart, mind the things of the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. It belongs to "the elect of God, who cry to Him night and day" (Luke 18:7). It belongs to those who know the Lord Jesus by experience, and have faith, hope, and charity. It belongs to those who are the fruit-bearing branches of the vine, the wise virgins, the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the heirs of the kingdom, the followers of the Lamb. These are they whom the Bible calls "the saints." And it is the saints and the saints alone of whom it is written, that they shall "never perish."

Does any one suppose that what I am saying applies to none but eminent saints? Does any one think that people like the apostles, prophets, and martyrs, may perhaps persevere to the end, but that it cannot be said of the common sort of believers? Let him know that he is entirely mistaken. Let him know that this privilege

of perseverance belongs to the whole family of God, to the youngest as well as the oldest, to the weakest as well as the strongest, to the babes in grace as well as to the oldest pillars of the Church. The least faith shall as certainly continue indestructible as the greatest. The least spark of grace shall prove as unquenchable as the most burning and shining light. Your faith may be very feeble, your grace may be very weak, your strength may be very small, you may feel that in spiritual things you are but a child. You may doubt the reality of your own conversion. Yet fear not, neither be afraid. It is not on the quantity of a man's grace, but on the truth and genuineness of it, that the promise rests. A bronze farthing is as truly a current coin of the realm as a golden sovereign, though it is not so valuable. Wherever sin is truly repented of, Christ is truly trusted, and holiness is truly followed, there is a work which shall never be overthrown. It shall stand when the earth and all the works thereof shall be burned up.

There are yet some things to be said

about perseverance, to which I must request special attention. Without them the account of the doctrine would be imperfect and incomplete. The mention of them may clear up some of the difficulties which surround the subject, and throw light on some points of Christian experience that God's children find hard to understand.

(a) Remember, then, that when I say believers shall persevere to the end, I *do not for a moment say that they shall never fall into sin*. They may fall sadly, foully, and shamefully, to the scandal of true religion, to the injury of their families, to their own deep and bitter sorrow. Noah once fell into drunkenness. Abraham twice said falsely that Sarah was only his sister. Lot took up his abode in Sodom. Jacob deceived his father Isaac. Moses spoke unadvisedly with his lips. David committed horrible adultery. Solomon lost his first love, and was led away by his many wives. Jehoshaphat made affinity with Ahab. Hezekiah forgot God, and boasted of his riches. Peter denied his Lord three times with an oath.

The apostles all forsook Christ in the garden. Paul and Barnabas had such a "sharp contention" that they were obliged to part company. All these are cases in point. They are all melancholy proofs that Christians may fall. But believers shall never fall *totally, finally, and completely*. They shall always rise again from their falls by repentance, and renew their walk with God. Though sorely humbled and cast down, they never entirely lose their grace. The *comfort* of it they may lose, but not the *being*. Like the moon under an eclipse, their light is for a season turned into darkness; but they are not rejected and cast away. Like the trees in winter, they may show neither leaves nor fruit for a time; but the life is still in their roots. They may be overtaken by a fault, and carried away by temptation. But they never perish.

(b) Remember, for another thing, that when I say believers shall persevere to the end, *I do not mean that they shall have no doubts and fears about their own safety*. So far from this being the case, the holiest men of God are sometimes sorely troubled by

anxieties about their own spiritual condition. They see so much weakness in their own hearts, and find their practice come so short of their desires, that they are strongly tempted to doubt the truth of their own grace, and to fancy they are but hypocrites, and shall never reach heaven at all. To *be safe* is one thing: to *feel sure* that we are safe is quite another. There are many true believers who never enjoy the full assurance of hope all their days. Their faith is so weak, and their sense of sin so strong, that they never feel confident of their own interest in Christ. Many a time they could say with David, "I shall one day perish" (1 Sam. 27:1); and with Job, "Where is my hope?" (Job 17:15). The "joy and peace in believing," which some feel, and the "witness of the Spirit," which some experience, are things which some believers, whose faith it is impossible to deny, never appear to attain. Called as they evidently are by the grace of God, they never seem to taste the full comfort of their calling. But still they are perfectly safe, though they themselves refuse to know it.

The full assurance of hope is not necessary to salvation. The absence of it is no argument against a man's perseverance to the end. That mighty master of theology, John Bunyan, knew well what he wrote, when he told us that Despondency and Much-afraid got safe to the celestial city at last, as well as Christiana and Valiant-for-the-truth. It is as true of the most doubting child of God, as it is of the strongest, that he shall "never perish." He may never feel it. But it is true.

(c) Remember, in the last place, that the certain perseverance of believers *does not free them from the necessity of watching, praying, and using means, or make it needless to ply them with practical exhortations.* So far from this being the case, it is just by the use of means that God enables them to continue in the faith. He draws them with the "cords of a man." He uses warnings and conditional promises as part of the machinery by which He ensures their final safety. The very fact that they despised the helps and ordinances which God has appointed would be a plain proof that they had no

grace at all and were on the road to destruction. St. Paul had a special revelation from God before his shipwreck, that he and all the ship's company should get safe to land. But it is a striking fact that he said to the soldiers, "Except the shipmen abide in the ship ye cannot be saved" (Acts 27:31). He knew that *the end* was ensured, but he believed also that it was an end to be reached by the use of certain *means*. The cautions, and conditional promises, and admonitions to believers, with which Scripture abounds, are all a part of the divine agency by which their perseverance is effected. An old writer says, "They do not imply that the saints can fall away, but they are preservatives to keep them from falling away." The man that thinks he can do without such cautions, and despises them as *legal*, may well be suspected as an impostor, whose heart has never yet been renewed. The man who has been really taught by the Spirit will generally have a humble sense of his own weakness, and be thankful for anything which can quicken his conscience, and keep him on his guard.

They that persevere to the end are not dependent on any means, but still they are not independent of them. Their final salvation does not hang on their obedience to practical exhortations, but it is just in taking heed to such exhortations that they will always continue to the end. It is the diligent, the watchful, the prayerful, and the humble, to whom belongs the promise—"They shall never perish."

I have now given an account of what I mean when I speak of the doctrine of perseverance. This, and this only, is the doctrine that I am prepared to defend. I ask men to weigh well what I have said, and to examine the statement I have made on every side. I believe it will stand inspection. . . .

II. The next thing I propose to do, is to *point out the reasons why many reject the doctrine of perseverance.*

(1) I believe one reason why many do not hold perseverance is *their general ignorance of the whole system of Christianity.* They have no clear idea of the nature, place, and

proportion of the various doctrines which compose the gospel. Its several truths have no definite position in their minds. Its general outline is not mapped out in their understandings. They have a vague notion that it is a right thing to belong to the church of Christ, and to believe all the articles of the Christian faith. They have a floating misty idea that Christ has done certain things for them, and that they ought to do certain things for Him, and that if they do them it will be all right at last. But beyond this they really know nothing. Of the great systematic statements in the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, they are profoundly ignorant. As to a clear account of justification, you might as well ask them to square the circle, or to write a letter in Sanscrit. It is a subject they have not even touched with the tips of their fingers. This is a sore disease, and only too common. Unhappily it is the disease of thousands who pass muster as excellent church members. It is absurd to expect such people to hold perseverance. When a man does not know what it is to be

justified, he cannot of course understand what it is to persevere to the end.

(2) I believe another common reason why many do not hold perseverance, is *an incorrect view of the nature of saving faith*. They regard faith as nothing better than a feeling or impression. As soon as they see a man somewhat impressed with the preaching of the gospel, and manifesting some pleasure in hearing about Christ, they set him down at once as a believer. By and by the man's impressions wear away, and his interest about Christ and salvation ceases altogether. Where is the faith he seemed to have? It is gone. How can his friends, who had pronounced him a believer, account for it? They can only account for it by saying, that "a man may fall away from faith," and that "there is no such thing as perseverance." And, in short, this becomes an established principle in their religion. Now this is a mischievous error, and I am afraid it is sadly common in many quarters. It may be traced to ignorance of the true nature of religious affections. People forget that there may be

many religious emotions in the human mind which has nothing to do with grace. The "stony-ground" hearers received the word *with joy*, but it had no root in them (Matt. 13:20). The history of all revivals proves that there may often be a great quantity of seemingly religious impression without any true work of the Spirit. Saving faith is something far deeper and mightier than a little sudden feeling. It is not an act of the feelings only, but of the whole conscience, will, understanding, and inward man. It is the result of clear knowledge. It springs from a conscience not grazed merely, but thoroughly stirred. It shows itself in a deliberate, willing, humble dependence on Christ. Such faith is the gift of God, and is never overthrown. Make faith a mere matter of feeling, and it is of course impossible to maintain perseverance.

(3) I believe another reason why many do not hold perseverance, is much like the one last mentioned. It is *an incorrect view of the nature of conversion*. Not a few are ready to pronounce any change for the better in a man's character, a conversion. They for-

get that there may be many blossoms on a tree in spring, and yet no fruit in autumn, and that a new coat of paint does not make an old door new. Some, if they see any one weeping under the influence of a sermon, will set it down at once as a case of conversion! Others, if a neighbor suddenly gives up drinking, swearing, or card-playing, and becomes a communicant and a great professor, at once rush to the conclusion that he is converted. The natural consequence in numerous instances is disappointment. Their supposed case of conversion often turns out nothing more than a case of outward reform, in which the heart was never changed. Their converted neighbor sometimes returns to his old bad habits, as the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. But then, unhappily, the pride of the natural heart, which never likes to allow itself mistaken, induces people to form a wrong conclusion about the case. Instead of telling us that the man never was converted at all, they say that "he was converted, but afterwards lost his grace and fell away." The true remedy for

this is a right understanding of conversion. It is no such cheap, and easy, and common thing as many seem to fancy. It is a mighty work on the heart, which none but He who made the world can effect, and a work which will always abide and stand the fire. But once take a low and superficial view of conversion, and you will find it impossible to maintain final perseverance. . . .

III. I now proceed, in the last place, to mention *some reasons why the doctrine of final perseverance is of great importance.*

(1) Perseverance is a doctrine of great importance because of *the strong color which it throws on the whole statement of the gospel. . . .*

Once admit that the saints of God may perish, and you seem to me to tear from the gospel crown its brightest jewel. We are hanging on the edge of a precipice. We are kept in awful suspense until we are dead. To tell us that there are plenty of gracious promises to encourage us, if we will only persevere, is but mockery. It is like telling the sick man that if he will only get well he

will be strong. The poor patient feels no confidence that he will get well, and the poor weak believer feels nothing in him like power to persevere. Today he may be in Canaan, and tomorrow he may be in Egypt again, and in bondage. This week he may be in the narrow way; but, for anything he knows, next week he may be back in the broad road. This month he may be a justified, pardoned, and forgiven man; but next month his pardon may be all revoked, and he himself in a state of condemnation. This year he may have faith, and be a child of God; next year he may be a child of the devil and have no part or lot in Christ. Where is the good news in all this? What becomes of the glad tidings? Verily such doctrine seems to me to cut up the joy of the gospel by the roots. Yet this is the doctrine we *must* hold, if we reject the final perseverance of the saints.

I bless God that I am able to see another kind of gospel than this in the Word of God. To my eyes the Bible seems to teach that he who once begins the life of faith in Christ, shall without doubt be preserved

from apostasy, and come to a glorious end. Once made alive by the grace of God, he shall live for ever. Once raised from the grave of sin and made a new man, he shall never go back to the grave, and become once more the old man "dead in trespasses and sins." He shall be kept by the power of God. He shall be more than conqueror through Him that loved him. The eternal God is his refuge; underneath him are the everlasting arms. The love in which he is interested is eternal. The righteousness in which he is clothed is eternal. The redemption which he enjoys is eternal. The *sense and comfort* of it he may lose by his own carelessness. But *the thing* itself, after once believing, is his for evermore.

Let any thinking man look at the two ways in which the weary and heavy-laden sinner may be addressed, and judge for himself which is most like the gospel of the grace of God. On the one side stands the doctrine, which says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Once believing thou shalt never perish. Thy faith shall never be allowed entirely to fail.

Thou shalt be sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption." On the other side stands the doctrine, which says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. But after thou hast believed take care. Thy faith may fail. Thou mayest fall away. Thou mayest drive the Spirit from thee. Thou mayest at length perish everlastingly." Which doctrine of these two contains most good news? Which is most like glad tidings? Is it all the same which way the sinner is addressed? Is it a matter of indifference whether we tell him that believing he is saved, *unless he falls away*, or whether we tell him that believing he is saved *for ever*? I cannot think it. I regard the difference between the two doctrines as very great indeed. It is the difference between January and June. It is the difference between twilight and noonday. . . .

(2) But the doctrine of perseverance is also of importance, because of *the special influence it is calculated to have on all who halt between two opinions in religion*.

There are many persons of this description in the church of Christ. There are hun-

dreds to be found in every congregation to which the gospel of Christ is preached, who know well what is right, and yet have not courage to act up to their knowledge. Their consciences are awakened. Their minds are comparatively enlightened. Their feelings are partially aroused to a sense of the value of their soul. They see the path they ought to take. They hope one day to be able to take it. But at present they sit still and *wait*. They will not take up the cross and confess Christ.

And what is it that keeps them back? In a vast proportion of cases they are afraid to begin, lest they should by-and-by fail and fall away. They see innumerable difficulties before them if they serve Christ. They are quite right. It is vain to deny that there are difficulties, both many and great. They stand shivering on the brink of the vast sea on which we would have them embark, and as they mark the rolling, tumbling waves, their hearts faint. They mark many a little boat on the waters of that sea, tossed to and fro, and struggling hard to make its way across, and looking as if it

would be engulfed in the angry billows, and never get safe to harbor. "It is of no use," they feel; "it is of no use. We shall certainly fall away. We cannot serve Christ yet. The thing cannot be done."

Now, what is most likely to give courage to these halting souls? What is most likely to hearten them for the voyage? What is most likely to cheer their spirits, nerve their minds, and bring them to the point of boldly launching away? I answer, without hesitation, the *doctrine of final perseverance*.

(3) The doctrine of perseverance is of importance because of *the special influence it is calculated to have on the minds of true believers*.

What is the best antidote against the believer's fears and anxieties? What is most likely to cheer him as he looks forward to the untried future and remembers the weary past? I answer without hesitation, the *doctrine of the final perseverance of God's elect*. Let him know that God having begun a good work in him will never allow it to be overthrown. Let him know that the footsteps of Christ's little flock are all in

one direction. They have erred. They have been vexed. They have been tempted. But not one of them has been lost. Let him know that those whom Jesus loves, He loves unto the end. Let him know that He will not suffer the weakest lamb in His flock to perish in the wilderness, or the tenderest flower in His garden to wither and die. Let him know that Daniel in the den of lions, the three children in the fiery furnace, Paul in the shipwreck, Noah in the Ark, were none of them more cared for and more secure than each believer in Christ is at the present day. Let him know that he is fenced, walled in, protected, guarded by the Almighty power of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and cannot perish. Let him know that it is not in the power of things present or things to come — of men or of devils — of cares within or troubles without, to separate one single child of God from the love that is in Christ Jesus.

This is strong consolation. These are the things which God has laid up in the gospel, for the establishment and confirmation of His people. Well would it be for

His people if these things were more brought forward than they are in the church of Christ. Verily I believe that one reason of the saints' weakness is their ignorance of the truths which God has revealed in order to make them strong.

I leave the subject of the importance of perseverance here. I trust I have said enough to show my readers that I have not called their attention to it without good cause. I feel strongly that the hardness of man's heart is such that nothing should be omitted in religious teaching which is likely to do it good. I dare not omit a single grain of truth, however strong, and liable to abuse, it may seem to be. Nothing appears to me of small importance which adds to the beauty of the gospel, gives encouragement to the halting, or confirms and builds up God's people. I desire to teach that the gospel not only offers present pardon and peace, but eternal safety and certain continuance to the end. This I believe to be the mind of the Spirit. And what the Spirit reveals I desire to proclaim.

And now I have brought before my

readers, to the best of my ability, the whole subject of perseverance. If I have failed to convince you, I am sorry, but I am satisfied the defect is not in the doctrine I defend, but in my manner of stating it. It only remains to conclude this paper by a few words of practical application.

(1) For one thing, let me entreat you to consider well, *whether you have any part at all in the salvation of Christ Jesus.*

It matters nothing what you believe about perseverance, if after all you have no faith in Christ. It matters little whether you hold the doctrine or not, so long as you have no saving faith, and your sins are not forgiven, and your heart not renewed by the Holy Ghost. The clearest head-knowledge will save no man. The most correct and orthodox views will not prevent a man perishing by the side of the most ignorant heathen, if he is not born again. Oh, search and see what is the state of your own soul!

You cannot live for ever. You must one day die. You cannot avoid the judgment after death. You must stand before the bar

of Christ. The summons of the Archangel cannot be disobeyed. The last great assembly must be attended. The state of your own soul must one day undergo a thorough investigation. It will be found out one day what you are in God's sight. Your spiritual condition will at length be brought to light before the whole world. Oh, find out what it is now! While you have time, while you have health, find out the state of your soul.

Your danger, if you are not converted, is far greater than I can describe. Just in proportion to the thorough safety of the believer is the deadly peril of the unbeliever. There is but a step between the unbeliever and the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched. He is literally hanging over the brink of the bottomless pit. Sudden death to the saint is sudden glory; but sudden death to the unconverted sinner, is sudden hell. Oh, search and see what is the state of your soul!

Remember that you may find out whether you have a saving interest in the invitations of the gospel. It is a thing which

may be known. It is nonsense to pretend that no man can tell. I never will believe that an honest man, with a Bible in his hand, will fail to discover his own spiritual condition by diligent self-examination. Oh, be an honest man! Search the Scriptures. Look within. Rest not till you find out the state of your soul. To live on and leave the soul's state uncertain, is not to play the part of a wise man but of a fool.

(2) In the next place, *if you know nothing of the privileges of the gospel, I entreat you this day to repent and be converted, to hear Christ's voice, and follow Him.*

I know no reason, human or divine, why you should not accept this invitation today and be saved, if you are really willing. It is not the quantity of your sins that need prevent you. All manner of sin may be forgiven. The blood of Jesus cleanseth away all sin. It is not the hardness of your heart that need prevent you. A new heart God will give you, and a new spirit will He put in you. It is not the decrees of God that need prevent you. He willeth not the death of sinners. He is not willing that any

should perish, but that all should come to repentance. It is not any lack of willingness in Christ: He has long cried to the sons of men, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Oh, why should not you be saved? (Rev. 22:17; John 6:37).

A day must come, if you are ever to be God's child, when you will cease to trifle with your soul's interests. An hour must come when at last you will bend your knee in real earnestness, and pour out your heart before God in real prayer. A time must come when the burden of your sins will at last feel intolerable, and when you will feel you must have rest in Christ or perish. All this must come to pass, if you are ever to become a child of God and be saved. And why not today? Why not this very night? Why not without delay seek Christ and live? Answer me, if you can!

(3) In the next place, *let me entreat every reader who holds final perseverance, so to use this precious doctrine as not to abuse it.*

There is an awful readiness in all men

to abuse God's mercies. Even the children of God are not free from the sad infection. There is a busy devil near the best of saints, who would fain persuade them to make their privileges a plea for careless living, and to turn their soul's meat into poison. I cannot look round the church of Christ, and see the end to which many high professors come, without feeling that there is need for a caution. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

Would we know what it is to abuse the doctrine of perseverance? It is abused when believers make their safety an excuse for inconsistencies in practice. It is abused when they make their security from final ruin an apology for a low standard of sanctification, and a distant walk with God. Against both these abuses I entreat believers to be on their guard.

Would we know what it is to use the doctrine of perseverance aright? Let us watch jealously over the daily workings of our own hearts. Let us mortify and nip in the bud the least inclination to spiritual

indolence. Let us settle it down in our minds, as a ruling principle of our lives, that the mercies of God are only turned to a good account when they have a *sanctifying effect on our hearts*. Let us root it firmly in our inward man, that the love of Christ is never so really valued as when it constrains us to increased spiritual-mindedness. Let us set before our minds, that the more safe we feel the more holy we ought to be. The more we realize that God has done much for us, the more we ought to do for God. The greater our debt, the greater should be our gratitude. The more we see the riches of grace, the more rich should we be in good works.

Oh, for a heart like that of the Apostle Paul! To realize as he did, our perfect safety in Christ—to labor as he did for God's glory, as if we could never do too much—this is the mark, this is the standard at which we ought to aim.

Let us so use the doctrine of perseverance that our good may never be evil spoken of. Let us so adorn the doctrine by our lives that we may make it beautiful to oth-

ers, and constrain men to say, "It is a good and holy thing to be persuaded that saints shall never perish."

(4) In the last place, *I entreat all believers who have hitherto been afraid of falling away, to lay firm hold on the doctrine of perseverance, and to realize their own safety in Christ.*

I want you to know the length and breadth of your portion in Christ. I want you to understand the full amount of the treasure to which faith in Jesus entitles you. You have found out that you are a great sinner. Thank God for that. You have fled to Christ for pardon and peace with God. Thank God for that. You have committed yourself to Jesus for time and eternity: you have no hope but in Christ's blood, Christ's righteousness, Christ's mediation, Christ's daily all-persevering intercession. Thank God for that. Your heart's desire and prayer is to be holy in all manner of conversation. Thank God for that. But oh, lay hold upon the glorious truth, that believing on Jesus you shall never perish, you shall never be cast away, you shall never fall away! It is written for

you as well as for the apostles, "My sheep shall never perish."

Yes, Jesus has spoken it, and Jesus meant it to be believed. Jesus has spoken it, who never broke His promises. Jesus has spoken it, who cannot lie. Jesus has spoken it, who has all power in heaven and earth to keep His word. Jesus has spoken it for the least and lowest believers, "My sheep shall never perish."

Would you have *perfect peace in life*? Then lay hold on this doctrine of perseverance. Your trials may be many and great. Your cross may be very heavy. But the business of your soul is all conducted according to an "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure" (2 Sam. 23:5). All things are working together for your good. Your sorrows are only purifying you soul for glory. Your bereavements are only fashioning thee as a polished stone for the temple above, made without hands. From whatever quarter the storms blow, they only drive you nearer to heaven. Whatever weather you may go through, it is only ripening you for the gar-

ner of God. Your best things are quite safe. Come what will, you will “never perish.”

Would you have *strong consolation in sickness*? Then lay hold on this doctrine of perseverance. Think, as you feel the pins of this earthly tabernacle loosening one by one, “nothing can break my union with Christ.” Your body may become useless; your members may refuse to perform their office; you may feel like an old useless log—a weariness to others, and a burden to yourself. But your soul is safe. Jesus is never tired of caring for your soul. You will “never perish.”

Would you have *full assurance of hope in death*? Then lay hold on this doctrine of perseverance. Doctors may have given over their labors; friends may be unable to minister to your wants; sight may depart; hearing may depart; memory may be almost gone, but the lovingkindness of God shall not depart. Jesus shall stand by you. Satan shall not harm you. Death shall not separate you from the everlasting love of God in Christ. You will “never perish.”

Perseverance

*Rejoice, believer, in the Lord,
Who makes your cause His own;
The hope that's built upon His Word
Can ne'er be overthrown.*

*Though many foes beset your road,
And feeble is your arm:
Your life is hid with Christ in God,
Beyond the reach of harm.*

*Weak as you are, you shall not faint,
Or, fainting, shall not die;
Jesus, the strength of every saint,
Will aid you from on high.*

*As surely as He overcame,
And triumphed once for you;
So surely, you, that love His name,
Shall triumph in Him too.*

— Newton

Restoring and Preserving Grace

*With all my powers of heart and tongue,
I'll praise my Maker in my song:
Angels shall hear the notes I raise,
Approve the song, and join the praise.*

*Angels, that make Thy church their care,
Shall witness my devotion there;
While holy zeal directs mine eyes
To Thy fair temple in the skies.*

*I'll sing Thy truth and mercy, Lord,
I'll sing the wonders of Thy Word:
Not all Thy works and names below,
So much Thy power and glory show.*

*To God I cried when troubles rose;
He heard me, and subdued my foes;
He did my rising fears control,
And strength diffused through all my soul.*

*The God of heaven maintains His state,
Frowns on the proud, and scorns the great;
But from His throne descends, to see
The sons of humble poverty.*

*Amid a thousand snares I stand,
Upheld and guarded by Thy hand:
Thy words my fainting soul revive,
And keep my dying faith alive.*

*Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows and from sins:
The work that wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes.*

— Watts

The Inheritance Publishers is a non-profit organization that prints and distributes sermons by Reformed forefathers from previous centuries. It is our desire to proclaim the gospel throughout the world by means of the printed page.

To receive additional copies of these booklets to pass on to others, feel free to request the number you can use and we will mail them to you free of charge. Voluntary donations are most welcome.

We kindly ask that you inform us of any change in address.

The Inheritance Publishers
P.O. Box 1334
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501
United States of America
<http://www.heritagebooks.org/inherit.html>

For additional literature of Reformed persuasion, visit <http://www.heritagebooks.org> or request a free book list via email from: RHBookstore@aol.com or by mail from Reformation Heritage Books, 2919 Leonard NE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525, USA.