

Convent Avenue Baptist Church
Wednesday Bible Study 5/5/10
Pastor Jesse Williams

The Articles of Faith; What we believe...

Article XI. Perseverance of Saints

John 10:27-29, 1 Corinthians 6:20, Ephesians 1:12-14, 2 Timothy 1:8-14

The doctrine that is expressed in this article of faith is important because it teaches that God's work of Salvation, Regeneration and Sanctification are not just simply one-time temporary activities in our lives that don't last. When we are truly born-again and saved by God through Jesus Christ, that activity of God is real and we are transformed in ways such that we will never be the same again. Real Christians go all the way with God and endure until the end. In one sense, "the end" means until the end of our lives; but in a more profound sense it means until Jesus comes back to judge the world in the end times of all creation.

Real Christians who have truly experienced the saving power of God through Jesus Christ in their lives are not just like a "flash in the pan" who might be here with God today, and then gone tomorrow. Real Christians or "saints" go all the way with God in their lives and persevere until the end. We don't quit on God because we don't want to quit on God. When we think about the goodness of God and what He has saved us from and how He has given us new life, we are moved and motivated to stay with God until the end no matter what. That does not mean that we sometimes don't struggle or even fall into temptation to sin in life, but we never quit God because our salvation is in *HIS* hands and not ours! In fact we are even in His hands, not our own. So since salvation is the work of God and not us, the same God who saved us is able to keep us, preserve us and guarantee us until the final day of redemption. In other words, when you are truly saved by God, you don't lose your salvation or somehow turn your back on it.

Over the years there have been many debates about whether or not people could lose their salvation or intentionally turn away from it. The scriptures teach that it is not true, and in the cases where it appears to have happened that the original salvation experience was not truly sincere and authentic. Judas Iscariot, who was one of the 12 apostles in the New Testament is the case that is often cited because he eventually turned away from Jesus and betrayed Him. However, as this doctrinal teaching reveals, there is such a thing as "superficial professors" who act like they know Jesus and have been saved by them, but in reality they have not.

Unfortunately even in the church there are people who may profess to know Jesus Christ who really don't. There is a distinct difference between knowing Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior; and knowing *about* Jesus Christ as a great teacher, preacher, leader or philosopher. People may sound the same, look the same and even go to church the same, but inwardly Jesus Christ is not truly Lord and Savior to them. Only God truly knows who is who, and only God is the rightful judge. The truth will come out in the end, because a superficial, surface relationship with Jesus Christ will not persevere until the end like authentic salvation will. So as a result, that's why people can come and join church and profess Jesus Christ, but then never come back or be seen in the church again. They did not profess a faith in Jesus Christ or commit to Him in a way that would truly persevere. On the other side, there are also those who are like the prodigal son, who are with God and then take an unfortunate detour away from God but eventually end up coming to themselves and coming back to God with a greater

appreciation. However the process happens, real Christians don't quit or disappear on God for good because;

1) Jesus holds us in His hands.

Jesus said Himself that God the Father gave us to Him, and that nobody can ever take us out of His hand. We are His sheep and we know His voice. When we experience real salvation, Jesus Himself holds us in His hands for our protection, guidance and safe-keeping. It is a comfort to know that through all of the many experiences that may happen to us in life, both positive and negative, that Jesus is always holding us in His hands. He takes care of us and nothing happens to us that is not subject to the authority of His hands. His hand represents power, and that power is what helps us to persevere. Not our will power, but His power! Rely on His power, not your own. God will keep you!

2) The Holy Spirit seals us.

Not only does Jesus hold us in His hands, but the Holy Spirit is the seal or guarantee that further keeps us safe and secure until the day of redemption. The presence and the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives is God's divine seal that guarantees the validity and authenticity of God's salvation in our lives. The Holy Spirit is the sign of God's promise to us to never leave us or forsake us. When God places the Holy Spirit in our lives, it is like His personal guarantee that He will keep His word to us and do everything that He has promised to do for us. So we are comforted by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives because every time we see a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, we are reminded that God will keep His promises and that He is going to complete the work of salvation, regeneration and sanctification that He has started in our lives.

3) We know that we belong to God.

The love of Jesus Christ and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit are constant reminders to every child of God that we do *belong* to God. We are His people, His workmanship, His children and the objects of His love. Now that we know that we belong to God, we should live like we belong to Him instead of the many worldly influences that also seek to own us improperly. Jesus Christ is the only one who has saved us and redeemed us, so why then should I live as if I am the property of someone or something else in the world? We are moved and motivated to persevere and to stay with God because ultimately God is the only one that has expressed how valuable we are by sending Jesus Christ to die for our sins. So, since we belong to Him, let's live for Him and stay with Him. Other worldly powers and people may claim us temporarily, but when our usefulness runs out, they will abandon us. God through Jesus Christ is the only one who has literally given His life for us. He has committed Himself to saving us and loving us until the end. God perseveres for us, let us also persevere with Him!

