

Unit six: Perseverance of the Saints

The miracle of enduring to the end

I. A faith that does not fizzle

- a. One of the most glorious realities of our salvation in Christ is not *just* that it was eternally predestined by the Father and purchased by the Son, but that the nature of that salvation perseveres until the end.
- b. In other words, authentic faith does not have an expiration date, it does not fizzle out or drift into apostasy.
- c. Or, to put it another way, authentic believers do not and cannot ever finally “lose” their faith.
- d. However, in response to those ironclad promises that salvation is guaranteed and cannot be lost, we can become blind to another aspect of our salvation, namely, that the evidence of authentic salvation is a tenacious, white-knuckled grip upon the promises of God found in the pages of Scripture that perseveres until the end.
- e. In other words, salvation is certain and guaranteed, *but it is only certain and guaranteed for those who persevere until the end.*
- f. That *seems* like a contradiction—but it’s not! Both are true!
 - Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and not one thing we could ever do could earn our salvation!
 - At the same time, however, the Bible makes clear that perseverance in faith and holiness are required for final salvation.
- g. To put it another way, although brief seasons of doubt, compromise with sin and even fearful luke-warmness are inevitable (unfortunately!), nevertheless, authentic salvation is manifested over the long haul in an urgent, desperate patterns of trust in the power of God that perseveres in our faith to the end.

- h. To take the Bible at face value forces you to recognize a profound theological tension:
- *Only those who persevere in their faith to the end will reach eternal Paradise with God forever and those who do not will perish—and only the elect will persevere, but they do so in radical, persistent dependence upon the power of God.*
- i. The famous phrase “once saved, always saved” is true, but it doesn’t go far enough. It skips the whole part in the middle that states that obtaining final salvation requires a tenacious dependence upon the power of God’s grace that keeps us from falling away.
- j.
- k. We need to learn to live in the parallel theological reality that God not only ordained the ends, but the means to those ends. And the means to reaching the ecstatic delights of eternity is a blood and guts fight to the death that perseveres by the power of God’s grace.

II. The “ifs” of salvation

- Matthew 10:26-33 “Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear *whispered* in *your* ear, proclaim upon the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And *yet* not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows. ³²*Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. ³³But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.*”
- Mark 13:13 “You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.”
- Romans 8:13 “For if you are living according to the flesh you must die, but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

- 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ²by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.
- Galatians 6:8-9 “For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”
- Colossians 1:21-23 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, ²²yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— ²³if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.
- 1 Timothy 4:17 “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”
- 2 Timothy 2:11-12 “It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; ¹²If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us.”
- Hebrews 3:6 but Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.
- Hebrews 3:12-14 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. ¹³But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,
 - This is not an empty threat. The warning about falling away from the living God is real.

- What are the signs of what could eventually become apostasy?
 1. The gradually increasing domination of secret sin.
 2. More and more time spent with ungodly people and getting to the point that you prefer to spend time with them...and thus become more influenced by them.
 - Their jokes become funnier, their ideas become more credible
 - Begin to say things like: “They are even nicer/more loving than most of the Christians I know”
 - Begin to play with “little” sins openly
 - Begin to use racy, edgy, provocative speech
 3. Incremental and gradual coldness to the Word; shrinking appetite for the feast of Scripture
 4. General, ambiguous and non-specific admissions of struggle—i.e., people who are drifting are not open about their sin
 5. Heart grows cold to investing in people and meeting with the body
 6. Avoidance of relationships, unwillingness to “let people in”
 7. Increasingly unorthodox theology
 - We have to remember that no one falls off the cliff into rejection of Christ all at once
 - It is all on a trajectory, a continuum

- Hebrews 10:39 “Therefore, **do not throw away your confidence,** which has a great reward. ³⁶ For **you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.** ³⁷ For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. ³⁸ But My righteous one shall live by faith; And **if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.** ³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, **but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.**”
- Hebrews 12:14 “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.”
- 2 Peter 1:10-11 “Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹ for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you”
- Revelation 2:10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**
- Revelation 2:26 He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS;
 - What do the “if’s” of these verses mean if salvation cannot be lost? If our salvation is secure and certain and guaranteed—and it *is*, why do these verses make it sound like that there is a possibility that one might not obtain final salvation?
 - This is the doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints!
 - Because consider the other side in which our salvation is spoken of as certain and guaranteed!

III. The certainty of salvation

- a. Taking the Bible at face value means that we also must rejoice and celebrate the reality that if we have been saved, that salvation is irrevocable and permanent.
 - And the certainty and guarantee of our salvation is not merely a theological inference, rather it is based off of explicit texts of Scripture.
 - Matthew 18:12-14 “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? ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ So it is not *the* will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.
 - John 3:36 He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”
 - John 5:24 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.
 - John 6:37-40 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”
 - John 10:27-30 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”

- Acts 26:17-18 “I am sending you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”
- Romans 5:8-10 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.
- Romans 8:29-30 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.
 - “...the people of God will persevere to the end and not be lost. The foreknown are predestined, the predestined are called, the called are justified, and the justified are glorified. No one is lost from this group. To belong to this people is to be eternally secure.” (John Piper, Five Points, p. 63)
- 1 Corinthians 1:7-9 so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,⁸ who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Ephesians 1:4-5 “even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him; in love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will”

- Ephesians 1:13-14 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.
- Philippians 1:6 “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”
- Colossians 1:9-14 “For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.”
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.
- Hebrews 9:12, 15
 Hebrews 9:12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

 Hebrews 9:15 For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.
- 1 John 2:19, 25

1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that ^{it} would be shown that they all are not of us.

1 John 2:25 This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.

- Jude 24–25 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, ²⁵to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and ^{it}forever. Amen.
- b. But the certainty, assurance and security of salvation for those who are in Christ should *never* deceive us into thinking that the path to final salvation (i.e., glorification) is not a process.
 - c. Rather, the path to final salvation and glorification *requires* perseverance—the *means* to attaining final salvation is a blood-bought perseverance and dependent obedience to the commands of Scripture.
 - This does *not* mean that we earn our final salvation by works; rather it means that the *responsibility* of the believer is to cling to the all-sufficient, blood-bought resources of Christ to attain the final phase of salvation.

IV. Definition of Perseverance of the Saints

- a. The Bible expresses three great realities about our salvation that we must simultaneously hold in tension:
 - 1) Our eternal salvation predestined by the Father and purchased by Christ is certain and eternally secure.
 - 2) Our perseverance in faith and holiness are required for final salvation.
 - 3) Believers are urged and warned to not drift from Christ in order to attain final salvation.

- In light of these realities, what does “Perseverance of the Saints” mean?
 - **The French Confession of Faith, XXI (1559):** “We believe that we are enlightened in faith by the secret power of the Holy Spirit, that it is a gratuitous and special gift which God grants to whom he will, so that the elect have no cause to glory, but are bound to be doubly thankful that they have been preferred to others. We believe also that faith is not given to the elect only to introduce them into the right way, but also to make them continue in it to the end. For as it is God who hath begun the work, he will also perfect it.”
 - **The Canons of Dort (1619):** “Whom God calls, according to His purpose, to the communion of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, He delivers also from the dominion and slavery of sin in this life; though not altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh, so long as they continue in this world...By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and the temptations of sin and of the world, those who are converted could not persevere in a state of grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end... He preserves in them the incorruptible seed of regeneration from perishing or being totally lost; and again, by His Word and Spirit, certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, to a sincere and godly sorrow for their sins, that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator, may again experience the favor of a reconciled God, through faith adore His mercies, and henceforward more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Thus, it is not in consequence of their own merits or strength, but of God's free mercy, that they do not totally fall from faith and grace...”
 - “Perseverance of the saints is the almighty work of God to keep us, through all affliction and suffering, for an inheritance of pleasures at God’s right hand forever.” (John Piper, *The legacy of sovereign joy*, p. 73)

- Short definition: Perseverance of the saints is the sovereign work of God to preserve us in our faith through temptations and trials and cause us to persevere until the end.
- Long definition: Perseverance of the saints describes the blood-bought work of God in the souls of the elect, whereby He, by His grace, through the Word, empowered by the Spirit, produces an urgent, sin-mortifying desperation and dependence upon Christ for His all-sufficient resources to maintain faith, holiness and perseverance to the end as the means by which we obtain the eternal pleasures in God predestined for us before time began.
 - Perseverance is the **blood-bought work of God** =
 - “Blood-bought” meaning, the power to persevere and maintain faith and not shipwreck our lives is a gift purchased by the death of Christ.
 - “Blood-bought” meaning: even the very dependence with which you place on Christ that helps you persevere to the end, was purchased by Christ at His death.
 - The very perseverance required to obtain final salvation is produced by Christ Himself.
 - The salvation purchased by Christ is that which produces the very things God demands from you—and what He demands is that you persevere until the end.
 - Perseverance the blood-bought work of God **in the souls of the elect** =
 - That is, only those who persevere in their faith—and thus prove that they are truly saved, are those who have chosen and predestined by God.
 - Perseverance is the work of God in us **by His grace, through the Word, empowered by the Spirit** =

- By his grace = that is, His gracious power to do what He commands (cf. Titus 2:11-12)
 - Through the Word = that is, the instrument through which transforming power is supplied to our lives.
 - The Canons of Dort: “This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to, or independent of the Word of God; but springs from faith in God's promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort”
 - Empowered by the Spirit = that is, the Person of the Trinity who actively supplies the grace through the instrument of the Word (cf. Ephesians 6:18)
- Perseverance is the work of God that **produces an urgent, sin-mortifying desperation and dependence upon Christ for His all-sufficient resources** =
- That is, the fruit/evidence of authentic faith is not passivity, but instead a vigorous and intense dependence upon the sufficiency of Christ.
 - In other words, the Christian life is war. It is hard. It is difficult. It is sometimes filled with seasons of doubt and spiritual darkness and measures of unbelief. And so this requires a needy desperation of the believer on Christ for His all-sufficient resources to persevere in faith. Attaining final salvation is certain, but *always* through the God-designed means of

- Hebrews 3:12-14 “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.”

- Perseverance is the work of God that produces dependence upon Christ **by which we maintain faith, holiness and perseverance to the end** =
 - In other words, the path to paradise is perseverance—an active perseverance that clings tenaciously to the power of Christ through His Word.
 - In other words, you need the power of Christ to believe and keep believing every single day.
 - You need the power of Christ to obey what God commands.
 - You need the power of Christ to persevere and not renounce Him for the counterfeit treasures of the world. If one does not do this, they will wander and stray and eventually perish.
 - The catch is, none of the elect (that is, those who are truly saved) will ever drift into apostasy and perish, but instead will persevere to the end!
 - All *we’re* saying here, is that the means through which the elect persevere is through the process of holding fast to Christ through His Word!

- Perseverance is **the means by which we obtain the eternal pleasures in God predestined for us before time began** =
 - “Means” is the key word here!
 - God has not only ordained the *ends*, but the *means* to those ends, and the means/process/path by which we access the final salvation predestined for us is *through* a God-empowered dependence
 - Again, all this is, is another theological tension in the Bible where two truths that seem incompatible on the surface are, in fact, perfectly true and complementary!
 - This is the great both/and...
 - **Reality #1:** all of God’s elect will obtain the final salvation for which they were chosen.
 - **Reality #2:** All Christians are called to fight to the death and strive in holiness in order to not drift and obtain final salvation.
 - **Reality #3:** Therefore, only the elect will persevere to the end and obtain final salvation, but only through the means which God has designed, the white-knuckled grip of dependence upon the promises of God found in the pages of Scripture.
 - Therefore, the means by which the elect will obtain final salvation is through

b. Summary:

- All who are truly saved will persevere and be preserved to the end.
- In other words, reaching final salvation is decisively a work of God in your life—but it is one for which you are responsible to have done *to* you.
 - That is, you are responsible to make use of the means God has provided to empower you to persevere to Paradise! (i.e., the promises and warnings of Scripture; the counsels, comforts and encouragements from other believers)
- Thus, when you obey and trust and depend on Christ every day, you are not performing a miracle—you are displaying that a miracle has been performed in you by sovereign grace—but it is a miracle for which you are responsible to have done *in* you.
- This also means that all those who harden their hearts and turn away and renounce Christ never were saved to begin with—no matter what they professed, how zealous they seemed and how they lived for a season.
- Or to put it another way, The faith that fizzles before the finish was flawed from the first!
 - Matthew 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*.²² Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’
 - 1 John 2:19 “They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”

- “The saints are not marked most deeply by what they do but by who they are. They are born again. They are a new creation. They do not go in and out of this newness. It is God’s work. And it is irrevocable. But the fruit of it in faith and obedience is a fight to the end. And perseverance says: the fight will be fought and will not be finally lost.” (John Piper, Five Points, p. 66)

V. Implications: forever grace is fighting grace

- a. What can we do with such a “strange” and “tricky” doctrine like “Perseverance of the Saints”? Do theological tensions in the Bible like this have any applicational value to our lives?
- b. And the answer is: absolutely! In fact, many struggles in the American church today exist precisely *because* we do not take the time to explore the rich, nuanced theological truths of the Bible.
- c. Here are 11 implications of the precious doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints:
 1. We must understand that the grace in Christ we have been given—the grace by which we are saved *is also the very grace given to fight the fight of faith...and win!*
 - In other words, the reality of the Bible is: the same faith that was predestined is the same faith that perseveres! The same grace that saves is the same grace
 - Put it another way, the *evidence* of authentic faith and salvation is *not* a cavalier indifference or casual apathy about the Christian life (“once saved, always saved!”), but instead, a diligent, desperate dependence upon the power of Christ through His Word to keep us from drifting into the shark-infested ocean of sin and destruction!
 2. Perseverance of the saints does *not* mean that authentic Christians can lose their salvation, rather, it claims that authentic Christians manifest the reality of their salvation by clinging to Christ to keep them from drifting.

3. The sovereign work of the Trinity in our salvation is the three-fold guarantee that our salvation can never be lost.
 - If salvation could be lost, that would mean Trinitarian incompetence!
 - If the loss of salvation could happen that would mean that not one of the Persons of the Trinity effectively accomplished any of their roles!
 - God the Father's election was not *decisive*
 - God the Son's atoning death was not *effective*
 - God the Spirit's regenerating, sanctifying work is not *conclusive*
 - What kind of salvation would this be if the Trinity could save us, but couldn't actually keep us?
 - **The Westminster Confession of Faith XVII:I:** "They, whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved." (WCF, XVII:I)
4. Perseverance of the saints helps us remember the centrality of God's Word in the preservation of our faith
 - And by the centrality of the Word, I mean both in private mediation as well as in public preaching!
 - There is no perseverance in the Christian life without the Word of God reinforcing our lives with bullet proof steel

- Listen to every sermon while sitting on the edge of your seat. Every sermon preached listen for truth that will empower you to escape temptation that otherwise might pull you into the cold ocean of sin and destruction!
 - Be listening for truths and realities that encourage your soul and help you fight the fight of faith
5. Perseverance of the saints is a community service project
- In other words, we need the blood-bought community of the church—it is indispensable!
 - One of the means God has given to us to keep us from crashing and burning in our faith is the Word-filled, love-filled encouragements, counsels, comforts and warnings to one another to cling to Christ and persevere!
 - This is what makes your job of speaking the truth in the lives of others so weighty and massive—and they speaking the truth to you!
6. Remember that the warnings against apostasy in Scripture are one of the very means God has given to keep us from drifting into apostasy.
- Again, does this doctrine mean that authentic believers predestined by the Father and purchased by the Son could actually apostatize and fall away from Christ?
 - In the end, no. But the *means* and *process* by which authentic believers maintain their faith and *not* apostatize is these very warnings against apostasy and falling away.
7. Remember that one of the main weapons that empowers us to persevere in our faith is the centrality of a supreme joy in Christ that triumphs over the suicidal pleasures of sin that would destroy us.

- In other words, it's not just a fear of falling away that keeps us close to Christ, but the realization that He is the most satisfying reality in the universe! There's no competition! Sin can't compete!
 - The more glory we see of who Christ is, the more liberation we experience from the sins that entangle us!
 - The supreme joy in Christ through the Word is what helps us resist the passing pleasures of sin!
8. Perseverance of the saints helps us reset our expectations of what the Christian life actually "feels" like.
- In other words, the Christian life is not beach day, it is D-Day; it is not a vacation, it is a violent warfare against the sin in our souls.
 - This doctrine helps us see that the Christian life, although supremely joy and satisfying, is *also at the same time, a blood and guts fight to the death.*
 - 1 Corinthians 9:24-27: "Do you not know that those who **run in a race** all run, but *only* one receives the prize? **Run in such a way that you may win.** ²⁵ Everyone who **competes** in the games **exercises self-control** in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶ Therefore I **run** in such a way, as not without aim; I **box** in such a way, as not beating the air; ²⁷ but **I discipline my body and make it my slave**, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."
 - Ephesians 6:12: "Our struggle is not against blood and flesh..."
 - 1 Timothy 1:18: "Fight the good fight"
 - 1 Timothy 6:12: "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called"

- 1 Peter 2:11: “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers, to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.”
 - J.C. Ryle: “A true Christian is one who has not only peace of conscience, but war within...A holy violence, a conflict, a warfare, a fight, a soldier’s life, a wrestling, [these] are spoken of as characteristic of the true Christian...He that would understand the nature of true holiness must know that the Christian is a man of war.”

9. Perseverance of the saints reminds us to be deadly serious about little sins

- Supposed “little” sins, if left unchecked, spread and grow and cause the dam of our resistance to crumble into disaster.
- John Owen: “Sin aims always at the utmost; every time it rises up to tempt or entice, might it have its own course, it would go out to the utmost sin in that kind. Every unclean thought or glance would be adultery if it could; every covetous desire would be oppression, every thought of unbelief would be atheism, might it grow to its head. Men may come to that, that sin may not be heard speaking a scandalous word in their hearts – that is, provoking to any great sin with scandal in its mouth; but yet every rise of lust, might it have its course, would come to the height of villainy: it is like the grave that is never satisfied.”
 - I had a guy tell me once: “I don’t plan on drifting from Christ!” Right! No one does! But that is what happens, because the process to final salvation necessitates tenacious desperation upon the power of God’s grace.

10. Perseverance of the saints reminds us that the process of perseverance is just as important as the finished product of getting to Paradise.

- The date on the calendar in which you first professed faith in Christ is not the ultimate issue. The issue is whether or not you are clinging to Christ through His Word moment-by-moment in the trenches of life.

11. Perseverance of the saints reminds us again that everything God does He does for His glory.

- Because one could wonder: why did God ordain that the Christian life would be a grueling fight to the death which requires moment-by-moment desperation and dependence?!
- And the answer is:
 - God did it like this so that we would taste the sufficiency of His grace in real time and be forced to despair in our worthless resources to live the Christian life and cast ourselves upon Christ for His endless ones!
 - And that is explicitly designed to put the supremacy of God on display!
 - The fight of faith and perseverance is a design of God to safeguard His supremacy while forcing us to look to Him for grace for every need.

Appendix

A comparison chart of Calvinism and Arminianism

Arminianism	Calvinism
<p>Free Will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every sinner receives “prevenient grace” which reverses the effects of the Fall so that his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature • Has the inherent power to freely choose good or evil • Does not need to be regenerated to repent or believe • Faith is an act of man and precedes new birth • The sinner cooperates with God in his salvation 	<p>Total Depravity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total depravity means that every aspect (intellect, emotions, feelings, desires, heart, motives, will, goals, appetite and even physical bodies) of every human being is completely infected and polluted with sin in such away that he is only, always controlled and influenced entirely by sin all the time and on his own it is impossible to break free from sin’s grip and control • “Our sinful corruption is so deep and so strong as to make us slaves of sin and morally unable to overcome our own rebellion and blindness. This inability to save ourselves from ourselves is <i>total</i>. We are utterly dependent on God’s grace to overcome our rebellion, give us eyes to see, and effectively draw us to the Savior.” John Piper • Repentance/new birth <i>must</i> happen in the heart for sinners to repent or believe (i.e., the conditions demanded for salvation) • The sinner contributes absolutely nothing to his salvation in any way
<p>Conditional Election</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In eternity past God foresaw who of their own free will would believe if offered the Gospel and chose those souls who would believe 	<p>Unconditional Election</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconditional election is the act of free grace where in eternity past God chose, decided and determined who would believe and be saved by Christ

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election is conditioned upon what sinful man would do, namely belief in Christ • The sinner's choice of Christ and not Christ's choice of the sinner is the ultimate cause of salvation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconditional election is the free, eternal, unconditional, unilateral and sovereign choosing by God in eternity past of particular souls for the express purpose of being saved by Christ • In eternity past God did not choose based on <i>anything</i> in the sinner, but solely on His wise, gracious, loving and sovereign choice • John Piper: "Unconditional election means that our infinite joy in Jesus was planned for us before we ever existed" • There was
<p>Universal Atonement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ's redeeming work on the cross makes it a possibility for everyone to be saved, but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone • Christ's death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually atone for anyone's sins in particular. • Rather, the salvation Christ purchased with His death becomes effective only if man of a free will choice chooses to accept it 	<p>Particular (Or, Limited) Atonement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not only did God in eternity past choose and determine who would believe and be saved, but Christ actually died for those particular souls whom God chose and purchased their salvation with Penal Substitutionary death on the cross • Jesus died for all, but not for all in the same way. For by His death Jesus actually paid the ransom for the elect and secured for them eternal salvation by His blood • Put another way: in eternity past God chose some from every tribe, tongue, nation and people and at the cross Jesus purchased those whom the Father chose from every tribe, tongue, nation and people • It should be noted that Particular Atonement <u>in no way</u> cancels the necessity to proclaim the Gospel. For since God chose some from every nation, and Christ died for

	<p>those whom the Father chose, our task is to go to every nation and find those whom the Father chose by proclaiming the Gospel to everyone</p>
<p>Resistible Grace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because he possesses an inviolable free will, sinful man can effectually resist the Holy Spirit and God's grace to the end • Sinful man can be prompted but never prevailed upon by God's grace unless he of his own free will allows God to grant him salvation 	<p>Irresistible Grace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "This means that the resistance that all human beings exert against God every day is wonderfully overcome at the proper time by God's sovereign, saving grace for undeserving rebels whom he chooses freely to save." John Piper • In other words, being first regenerated by the Spirit, through the agency of the Word, man's heart is transformed and inclined by the Holy Spirit to so long for Christ that, in the end, there is no choice left but to give all to Christ—in this sense, grace is irresistible
<p>Fall from Grace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith • NOTE: not all Arminians have been agreed on this point 	<p>Preservation of the Saints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the work of the Holy Spirit, through the agency of the Word to keep and preserve us in the faith until our death or Christ's return at the Rapture • To put this most simply, this is the work of God in our hearts where He empowers us to obey and persevere in the faith until death or Christ's return at the Rapture • "We believe that all who are justified will win the fight of faith. They will persevere in faith and never surrender to the enemy of their souls. This perseverance is the promise of the new covenant, obtained by the blood of Christ, and worked in us by God himself,

	<p>yet not so as to diminish, but only to empower and encourage, our vigilance; so that we may say in the end, <i>I have fought the good fight, but it was not I, but the grace of God which was with me.</i>"</p> <p>John Piper</p>
	<p>Double Predestination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In eternity past God decided and determined who would believe and undeservingly be saved and who would disbelieve and deservingly be condemned • In other words, God both predestined some to heaven and some to hell
	<p>Best of all possible worlds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "God governs the course of history so that, in the long run, His glory will be more fully displayed and His people more fully satisfied than would have been the case in any other possible world. • If we look only at the way things are now in the present era of this fallen world, this is not the best-of-all-possible worlds. But if we look at the whole course of history, from creation to redemption to eternity and beyond, and see the entirety of God's plan, it is the best-of-all-possible plans and leads to the best-of-all-possible eternities. • And therefore this universe (and the events that happen in it from creation into eternity, taken as a whole, with sin and evil included) is the best-of-all-possible-worlds." <p>John Piper</p>