



The Doctrine of Saints' Perseverance



Part Seven

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It has been pointed out on a previous occasion that what has been engaging our attention is far more than a subject for theological debate: it is full of practical value. It must be so, for it occupies a prominent place in the Divinely-inspired Scriptures which are "*profitable for doctrine*" (2 Tim. 3:16), and that, because it is "*the doctrine which is according to godliness*" (1 Tim. 6:3)—revealing the standard of piety and actually promoting piety in the soul and life of him who receives it by faith. Everything revealed in the Word and all the activities of God have two chief ends in view: His own glory and the good of His people. And as we draw to the close of this book it is fitting that we should seek to set before readers some of the benefits which are conferred by a believing apprehension of this truth, some of the blessed effects it produces and fruits it yields. We somewhat anticipated this aspect of our subject by what we said under its Blessedness (in booklet four), yet as we then did little more than generalize it behooves us now to more definitely particularize.

In attempting to describe some of the benefits which this doctrine affords we shall be regulated by whether we are viewing it from the Divine side or the human, for as we have sought to make clear in the preceding sections, the perseverance of the saints in holiness and obedience is the direct effect of the continued operations of Divine grace and power within them, and those operations are guaranteed by the promises of the everlasting covenant. Viewed from the Divine side,

perseverance in the faith and in the paths of righteousness is itself a gift, a distinct gift from God: “*who shall also confirm you unto the end*” (1 Cor. 1:8). Absolutely considered God’s preservation of His people turns upon no condition to be fulfilled by them, but depends entirely on the immutability and invincibility of the Divine purpose. Nevertheless, God does not preserve His people by mere physical power and without their concurrence, as He keeps the planets steadfast in their orbits. No, rather does He treat them throughout as moral agents and responsible creatures, drawing them with the cords of love, inclining their hearts unto Himself, rendering effectual the motives He sets before them and the means which He requires them to use.

The infallible certainty of the Divine operations on behalf of and within His saints and the mode of their working cannot be insisted upon too emphatically or repeated too often. On the one hand, the crown of honour and glory must be ascribed to the King Himself; and on the other hand, the response and concurrence or loyalty of His subjects is to be made equally plain. God preserves His people by renewing them in the inner man day by day (2 Cor. 4:16), by quickening them according to His Word, by granting them fresh supplies of grace, and also by moving them to heed His warnings and respond to His exhortations; in a word, by working in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). Thus our portrayal of some of the benefits and fruits of this doctrine will be governed by our viewpoint: whether we trace out what follows faith’s appropriating of the Divine promises or what follows from faith’s appropriation of the Divine precepts. God has promised to carry forward in sanctification and complete in glorification the work begun in regeneration, yet not without requiring us to perform the duties of piety and avoid everything contrary thereto.

1. Here is cause for adoring God. The doctrine set forth in these booklets most certainly redounds more to the glory of God

than does the contrary one, which leaves our everlasting felicity in uncertainty. It exemplifies God's power, whereby He not only restrains our external foes from overthrowing our salvation, but also by fixing the wavering disposition of our wills that we do not cease from the love of and desire after holiness. Also His truth in the promises of the Covenant, on which we securely rely, being assured that He who gave them will certainly make the same good. His goodness, whereby He patiently bears with our weakness and dullness, so that when we fall into sin, He does not cast us off, but by His loving chastenings recovers us through moving us to renewed repentance. His holiness, when because of our folly we trifle with temptation for a season, disregarding His warnings, He makes us conscious of His displeasure by withholding tokens of His favour and declining an answer to our prayers, bringing us to confess and forsake our sins, that fellowship with Him may be restored and that peace and joy may again be our portion.

2. Here is peace for the soul in a world of strife and where men's hearts fail them for fear of the future. This is evident if we consider the opposite. In themselves believers are weak and unstable, unable to do anything as they ought. They have no strength of their own to keep themselves in the love of God, but carry about with them a body of sin and death. They are continually exposed to temptations which ensnare the wisest and overthrow the strongest. Suppose then they had received no guarantee of the unchangeableness of God's purpose, no infallible word of the continuance of His love, no pledge that He will keep and secure them by the working of His mighty power, no declaration that unfailing supplies of His Spirit and grace shall be vouchsafed them, no assurance that He will never leave them nor forsake them, no revelation of an Advocate on high to plead their cause and of the sufficiency of His mediation and the efficacy of His intercession. But rather that they are left to their own fidelity: and in consequence some of the most eminent saints have apostatized from the faith, that thousands have

utterly fallen out of God's love and favour, and so been cast from His covenant, from whence few have ever recovered; and all confidence and peace will be at an end, and fear and terror fill their place.

How vastly different is the teaching of the Word from what we have supposed above. There we find God, as it were, saying to His people: I know your weakness and insufficiency, your dullness and darkness, how that without My Son and continual supplies of His Spirit you can do nothing. The power and rage of your indwelling sin is not hidden from Me, and how with violence it brings you into captivity against your desires. I know that though you believe, yet you are frequently made to groan over your unbelief, and that you are then ready to fear the worst. And when in that case Satan assaults and tempts, seeking to devour you; that first he acts like a serpent, attempting to beguile and ensnare, and then as a lion to terrify. But be not ignorant of his devices: resist him steadfast in the faith: take unto you the whole armour of God, watch night and day that ye be not seduced by him, and you shall overcome him by the blood of the Lamb. *"Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness"* (Isa. 41:10). Though you may be tripped up, ye shall not utterly fall. Though you be fearful, My kindness shall not be removed from you. So be of good cheer, and run with patience the race that is set before you.

3. Here is solid comfort for the saints in a day of declension, when there is a great "falling away" of those who once appeared to run well. Though what is termed "organized Christianity" be a demonstrated failure, though corporate Christendom be now in ruins, though ten thousands have apostatized yet let the saints be fully assured that God has and will reserve to Himself a remnant who bow not the knee to Baal; and therefore may those who have the living God for their "refuge" confidently exclaim *"Therefore will not we fear though the earth* (the most stable

and ancient establishments) *be removed, and though the mountains* (the leaders and most towering professors) *be carried* (by the winds of false doctrine) *into the midst of the sea*”—the masses of the wicked: Isa. 57:20. When many of the nominal disciples of Christ “*went back and walked no more with Him,*” He turned to the apostles and said “*Will ye also go away?*” Whereupon Simon Peter as their spokesman answered “*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life*” (John 6:66-68). Thus it was then, has been throughout the centuries, and will be unto the end of time. The sheep are secure, while the goats turn aside and perish.

Observe how Paul emphasizes this very note in 2 Tim. 2. Hymeneus and Philetus eminent men in the church had apostatized, and by their defection and false teaching had overthrown the doctrinal faith of some; yet says the apostle, This is no reason why the real children of God should be made to quake and imagine that their end is uncertain. “*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: the Lord knoweth them that are His; and, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity*” (verse 19). Note the two sides of that “seal,” preserving the balance of Truth: on the one side there is a cordial—those who are built upon the foundation of God’s unchanging purpose and love shall not be prevailed against; on the other there is a warning—trifle not with “iniquity,” whether it be doctrinal or practical, but “depart” from it. Similarly John assures believers who might be shaken at seeing certain in their assemblies being seduced by the antichrists of that day, but such were only unregenerate professors (1 John 2:19), and therefore that the regenerate, held in the hand of Christ, shall not be overcome by deceivers.

4. Here is ground for holy confidence. The Lord knows how difficult is the task assigned His people and how deep is the sense of their own insufficiency. He knows too that nothing more enervates their hearts and enfeebles their hands than doubts and fears, and therefore has He made absolute promise to

those who hear His voice and follow Him that “*they shall never perish*” (John 10:29). It was this which armed Joshua to the battle: “*There shall not a man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.*” And from thence the Lord drew an argument—the very opposite of that which the legalistic Arminian infers—namely, “*Be strong and of a good courage*” (Josh. 1:5, 6). Such a promise would not make a Joshua reckless or lax, whatever effect it might have upon a self-righteous freewiller. No, rather would it produce a holy confidence, which prompted to the use of lawful means and gave assurance of God’s blessing thereon. Such a confidence causes its possessor to trust in the Lord with all his heart and lean not unto his own understanding.

Such encouragement is conveyed and such confidence is engendered by the Divine declaration “*the righteous shall hold on his way*” (Job 17:9). As the young believer contemplates the likely length of the journey before him and the difficulties of the road which has to be trod, he is apt to give way to despair; but if his faith lays hold of this promise that he shall certainly reach the desired goal, new strength will be imparted to his feeble knees and increased resolution to his fainting heart. It is the confidence that by continuing to plod along the weary traveller will reach home, which causes him to take courage and refuse to give in. It is the assurance of success which is to the right-minded and best stimulus of labour. If the Christian be persuaded that the world shall not overcome him, that sin shall not slay him, that Satan shall not triumph over him, then will he take unto him the shield of faith and the Sword of the Spirit and fight like a man and be more than conqueror. As it has been truly said “This is one of the reasons why British troops have so often won the fight: because the drummer boys know not how to beat a retreat and the soldiers refused to believe in the possibility of defeat.”

5. Here is consolation for us in the severest trials. Let us

illustrate this point from the case of Job, for it is difficult to conceive one more acute and extreme than his. You know how severe, how many, and how protracted were those afflictions. You know how far Satan was permitted to proceed with him. You know how his wife turned against and his so-called friends tantalized him. His cup of trouble was indeed filled to the brim, yet we find him looking above his afflictions and censorious critics, exclaiming *“He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold”* (23:10). Weigh well those words and bring to mind the situation of the one who uttered them. Observe that there was no doubt or uncertainty in his mind about the issue of his afflictions: it was not *“I fear I shall perish in the furnace,”* for he refused to allow those fiery trials to turn him into a sceptic. Nor did he merely cherish a flattering hope that things might possibly be well with him at the end, and say *“I may come forth as gold.”* No, there was the undoubting, positive conviction *“I shall!”*

Ah, my reader, Job saw *“the bright light in the cloud”* (37:21). He drew comfort from what assured Cowper when he wrote those lines:

***“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace:
Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face.”***

Job knew that God maketh *“all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose”* (Rom. 8:28), and therefore he knew there could be no possibility of his perishing in the fires. And why was there no doubting as to the outcome of his trials? Because he could say *“For I know that my Redeemer liveth”* and therefore could he add *“and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God”* (19:25, 26). That was the ground of his confidence—nothing in himself. That was what caused him to triumphantly exclaim *“I shall come forth as gold.”* Cheer up

fellow believer: the process may be painful, but the end is sure; the path may be rough and you may feel faint, but the prospect is entrancing and certain.

6. Here is cause for praise. Why should I be found still holding on my way when so many who made a bright profession and who appeared to make much faster progress in spiritual things than I did, have long ago dropped out of the race, and have gone right back into the world? Certainly not because I was any better by nature. No, I freely ascribe all the glory unto God who has so graciously ministered unto me and continued to work in me; who has been so longsuffering and recovered me when I strayed. O what thanks are due unto Him. How often have I had occasion to say "*He restoreth my soul*" (Psa. 23:3)—as He did Abraham's, Jacob's, Peter's. Thus I may say with David "*I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever*" (Psa. 89:1). Not today or tomorrow, but for "forever;" not only when I come to the brink of the Jordan, but after I have passed safely through it, the high praises of His faithfulness shall be the theme of my song throughout eternity.

7. Here is a powerful incentive to confirm Christians in their spiritual lives and to spur them unto the duties of piety. This is evident from what regeneration works in them. All the arguments drawn from the possibility of the apostasy of saints are derived from the terror of dreadful threatenings and the fear of eternal punishment; whereas those taken from the assurances conveyed by the everlasting covenant breathe nothing but the sweetness of grace. Since the children of God have received "*the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry Father, Father*" (Rom. 8:15), they are more powerfully drawn by the cords of love than by the scourge of horror. Moreover since all acceptable obedience springs from gratitude, then that which most effectually promotes gratitude must be the most powerful spring of obedience, and as to whether a grace bestowed by the Lord is perpetual or one which may be lost is likely to inspire the deepest gratitude, we leave to the judgment of our readers. The

more firmly be secured the reward of duty, the more diligent shall we be in performing duty.

8. Here is an incentive to practical godliness. If Christian perseverance is one of continuance in the path of obedience and holiness, then will the saints make diligent use of the aids which God has provided for them and eschew the contrary. Especially will they be encouraged to ask for and seek after the grace which God has promised. As it is a sight and sense of Christ's being crucified because of my heinous sins which produces evangelical repentance (Zech. 12:10), so it is a realization of the immutability of God's purpose, the unchangeableness of His love, and the preciousness of His promises which strengthen faith and inflame love to serve and please Him. This twofold doctrine of Divine preservation and perseverance in holiness supplies effectual motives unto piety. Negatively, it removes discouragements by letting us know that our denials of self, mortifications of the flesh and efforts to resist the Devil, are not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9). Positively, it places upon us the most powerful obligations to live unto God, to show forth His praises, and adorn the doctrine we profess (2 Cor. 7:1).

9. Here we are shown the need of continual diligence in order to persevere unto the end. But, says the Arminian, I would have concluded the very opposite, since final perseverance be guaranteed. That is due to his misconception. God has declared "*The righteous shall hold on his way:*" not become slack and sit down, still less that he will forsake it for the way of the ungodly. That very promise is the best means of producing the desired result. If a man could be definitely assured that in a certain line of business he would make a fortune, would such assurance cause him to refuse that business or lead him to lie in bed all day? No, rather would it be an incentive to diligence in order to prosper. Napoleon believed he was "the man of destiny:" did that conviction freeze his energies? No, the very opposite. God's promising a thing unto His children causes them to pray for the same with greater confidence, earnestness and importunity. God

hath promised to bless our use of lawful means and therefore we employ them with diligence and expectation.

10. Here is a truth to humble us. Admittedly it has been wrested by Antinomians and perverted unto the feeding of a spirit of presumption. But it is “ungodly men” and not the saints who turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness (Jude 4). Different far is the effect of this truth upon the regenerate. It works in them a sense of their own insufficiency, causing them to look outside of themselves for help and strength. So far from rendering them slothful, it deepens their desires after holiness and makes them seek it more earnestly. As the Christian realizes “*Thou hast commanded us to keep Thy precepts diligently,*” he is moved to pray “*O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes diligently . . . Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments, for herein do I delight*” (Psa. 119:4, 5, 35). The more he is taught of the Spirit the more will he cry “*Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe*” (Psa. 119:117).

11. Conclusion

It now remains for us to gather up a few loose ends, to summarize what has been before us, make a practical application of the whole, and our present task is completed. Not that we have said anything like all that could be said thereon; yet we have sought to set before the reader the principal aspects of this subject and to preserve a due balance between the Divine and human sides of it—God’s operations in connection therewith and the Christian’s concurrence therein. Much of the opposition which has been raised against what is termed “the dangerous tendency” of this truth arose from a defective view of the same, through failure to apprehend that the perseverance of the saints exhibited in the Scriptures is their continuance in faith and holiness: that the One who has made infallible promise they shall reach the desired goal has also decreed they shall tread the one path which leads to it, that the means as well as the end are ordained by Him, and that He moves them to make diligent use

of those means and blesses and makes effectual their labour in the same.

That for which we have contended throughout these chapters is steadfastness in holiness, constancy in believing, and in bringing forth the fruits of righteousness. Saving faith is something more than an isolated act: it is a spiritual dynamic, a principle of action, which continues to operate in those who are the favoured subjects of it. This is brought out very clearly and decisively in the great Faith chapter. In Heb. 11 the Holy Spirit sets before us the faith of Abel, of Enoch, of Noah, of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, and after describing various exercises and fruits of the same, declares "*these all died in faith*" (verse 13), not one of them apostatized from the same. The "*faith*" spoken of, as the context shows, was both a justifying and sanctifying one, and those who had received the same from God not only lived by it but died in it. Theirs was a faith which wore and lasted, which overcame obstacles and triumphed over difficulties, which endured to the end. True, the patriarchs had to wrestle against their natural unbelief, and, as the inspired records show, more than once they were tripped up by the same, yet they continued fighting and emerged conquerors.

The Christian is required to continue as he began. He is to daily own his sins to God and he is daily to renew the same acts of faith and trust in Christ and His blood which he exercised at the first. Instead of counting upon some past experience, he is to maintain a present living on Christ. If he continues to cast himself on the Redeemer, putting his salvation wholly in His hands, then He will not, cannot, fail him. But in order to cast myself upon Christ I must be near Him; I cannot do so while following Him "afar off." And to be near Him, I must be in separation from all that is contrary to Him. Communion is based upon an obedient walk (John 15:10): the one cannot be without the other. And for the maintenance of this, I must continue to "show the same diligence" I did when first convicted of my lost

estate, when I perceived that sin was my worst enemy, that I was a rebel against God and His wrath upon me, and when I fled to Christ for refuge, surrendering myself to His lordship and trusting entirely to the sufficiency of His sacrifice to save me from my sins—their dominion, their pollution, and their guilt.

“Show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end” (Heb. 6:11). The selfsame earnestness and pains which actuated my heart and regulated my acts when I first sought Christ must be continued unto the end of my earthly course. This means persevering in a holy life, in the things which are appointed by and are pleasing to God, and unto this the servants of God are to be constantly urging the saints. “Ministerial exhortation unto duty is needful unto those who are sincere in the practice of it, that they may abide and continue therein” (John Owen). In no other way can the “full assurance of hope” (a confident expectation of the issue or outcome) be Scripturally maintained. The Christian has to be constant in giving “the same diligence” to the things of God and the needs of his soul as he did at the outset. “He said, to the end, that they might know they had not reached the goal, and were therefore to think of further progress. He mentioned diligence that they might know they were not to sit down idly, but to strive in earnest.” And who think you, my reader, was the author of that quotation? None other than John Calvin! How grievously has Calvinism been perverted and misrepresented.

“That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:12). The apostle here warns against the vice which is the antithesis of the virtue previously enjoined, for slothfulness is the opposite of diligence. The indolence dehorted is in each of us by nature, for spiritual laxity is not something peculiar to those of a lazy disposition. The evil principle of the “flesh” remains in every Christian and that principle hates and therefore is opposed to the things of God. But the flesh must be resisted and the desires of the “spirit” or principle of grace heeded. When conscious of this

indisposition unto practical holiness, this native enmity against the same, the believer must pray with renewed earnestness “*draw me, we will run after Thee*” (Song of Sol. 1:4), “*Order my steps in Thy Word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me*” (Psa. 119: 133). It is this which distinguishes the true child of God from the empty professor: his wrestling with the Lord in secret to enable him to press forward in the race set before him.

“*But followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*” The immediate reference is to the patriarchs who, by continuing steadfast in the faith, persevering in hope amid all the trials to which they were subjected, had no entrance into the promised blessings. Their faith was far more than a notional one: it was influential and practical, causing them to live as “*strangers and pilgrims*” in this scene (see Heb. 11:13). The word for “*patience*” here is usually rendered “*longsuffering.*” It is a grace which makes its possessor refuse to be daunted by the difficulties of the way or be so discouraged by the trials and oppositions encountered as to desert the course or forsake the path of duty. It is just such faith and patience which are required of the saint in every age, for there never has been and never will be any journeying to Heaven on “*flowery beds of ease.*” If the continued exercise of such graces was required of the patriarchs—persons who were so high in the love and favour of God—then let not us imagine they may be dispensed with in our case. The things promised are not obtained “*for faith and patience,*” but they are entered into “*through*” them.

Assurance of final perseverance neither renders needless wariness and care (1 Cor. 10:12), nor the unwearied use of the appointed means of grace (Gal. 6:9). We must distinguish sharply between confidence in Christ and a weakening of the security of the flesh. The teaching that carnal security and presumption is no bar to eternal glory is a doctrine of the Devil. David prayed “*Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end*” (Psa. 119:33). Upon it Spurgeon said,

“The end of which David speaks is the end of life, or the fullness of obedience. He trusted in grace to make him faithful to the utmost, never drawing a line and saying to obedience ‘Hitherto shalt thou go but no further.’ The end of our keeping the Law will come only when we cease to breathe: no good man will think of marking a date and saying, ‘It is enough, I may now relax my watch, and live after the manner of men.’ As Christ loves us to the end so must we serve Him to the end. The end of Divine teaching is that we may serve to the end” (Treasury of David, Volume 6). O for more of this well-balanced teaching.

When faith and the spirit of obedience are inoperative the features of the new birth are under a cloud, and when we have no evidence of regeneration we lack any warrant to entertain the assurance of eternal happiness. The man who gives free rein to the flesh and takes his fill of the world gives the lie to his profession that he is journeying to Heaven. It is the glory of the Gospel that while it announces mercy unto the chief of sinners, yet if any be encouraged by this to persist in a course of evil-doing it pronounces his doom. The Gospel encourages hope, but it also promotes holiness; it imparts peace, but it also inculcates godly piety; it cherishes confidence, yet not by looking back to conversion but forward to the desired haven. It justifies the expectation of preservation, but only as we persevere in the path of duty. While it declares emphatically that the believer’s continuance in and maintenance of his faith depend wholly on something extraneous to himself or his present case, yet with equal clearness it insists that the believer’s perseverance is carried on and perfected by his use of all the appointed means.

It is freely granted that many of the objections which are made against this subject apply most pertinently to the Antinomian perversion of it, for hyper-Calvinists have been guilty of presenting this truth in such an unguarded and one-sided manner as to virtually set a premium on loose walking. They have dwelt to such an extent upon the Divine operations as to quite crowd

out human responsibility, picturing the Christian as entirely passive. Others who were quite unqualified to write on such a theme have given much occasion to the enemies of the Truth by their crudities, representing the security of the believer as a mechanical thing, divorcing the end from the means, ignoring the safe-guards by which God Himself has hedged about this doctrine, and prating about “once saved, always saved” no matter what the daily walk may be. Nevertheless such abuses do not warrant anyone in repudiating the doctrine itself and opposing the teaching of Scripture thereon, for there is nothing in the Word of God which has the slightest tendency to make light of sin or countenances loose living, but rather everything to the contrary.

When expressing his hatred of the truth of the eternal security of Christ’s sheep, John Wesley exclaimed “How pleasing is this to flesh and blood,” which is the very thing it is not. Such a doctrine can never be agreeable to fallen human nature. Depraved man is essentially proud, and hence any scheme of perseverance accomplished by the strength of man’s own will power is pleasing to the vanity of his mind; but a perseverance dependent upon the faithfulness and power of God, a perseverance which is not the result of any human sufficiency but rather of the merits and intercession of Christ, is most unpalatable unto the self-righteous Pharisee. Only the one who has been given to feel the prevailing power of indwelling sin, who has discovered that his own will and resolutions are wholly incompetent to cope with the corruptions of his heart, who has proved by painful experience that he is completely “without strength” and that apart from Christ he can do nothing, will truly rejoice that none can pluck him out of the Redeemer’s hand. As only the consciously sick will welcome the Physician, so none but those who realize their own helplessness will really find the doctrine of Divine preservation acceptable to them.

Moreover, the duties inculcated by this doctrine are most repugnant to flesh and blood. Subjection to Christ’s authority

and the daily taking of His yoke upon us is a requirement very far from welcome to those who wish to please themselves and follow their own devices. The standard of piety, the spirituality of God's Law, the nature of holiness, the insistence that we must keep ourselves unspotted from this world, are directly contrary to the inclinations of the natural man. That we must discipline our affections, regulate our thoughts, mortify our carnal appetites, cut off a right hand and pluck out a right eye, are certainly not good news to the unregenerate, especially when God insists that such mortification is never to be remitted but continued until mortality be swallowed up of life. No, it is impossible that fallen man will ever be pleased with a doctrine of perseverance in denying self, taking up his cross daily and following a holy Christ who is despised and rejected by this world. Thus it will abundantly appear from all that has been said, how baseless and pointless is the Arminian objection that the preaching of this doctrine encourages laxity and makes for licentiousness.

How can it be supposed that the proclamation of this blessed truth will lead to carelessness and carnality when we lay it down as a fundamental maxim that no one has any shadow of reason to consider himself interested in the blessing of perseverance except as he has and gives clear evidence that he is inwardly conformed to God and outwardly obedient to His commands? Yet it must be allowed, no matter how carefully and proportionately the doctrine of Scripture be set forth by God's servant, there will always be those ready to wrest to their own destruction. If the Lord Jesus was falsely charged with "*perverting the nation*" (Luke 23:2) His ministers must not expect immunity from similar criminations. If the apostle Paul was slanderously reported of teaching "*Let us do evil, that good may come*" (Rom. 3:8), we must not be surprised if the enemies of God should falsify our assertions and draw erroneous inferences from them. Yet this must not deter us from proclaiming all the counsel of God or keeping back anything

that would be profitable to His people (Acts 20:27, 20).

And now to make practical application of all that has been before us. 1. How earnest should sinners be of becoming Christians. In Christ alone is salvation and safety to be found. Security of person and of estate is the principal concern of men in this world, but security of soul has little or no place in the thoughts of the majority. How fearful to be in imminent danger of death and eternal punishment, and how alarming the condition of those indifferent to their everlasting welfare. Where there is an underground shelter which is out of range of artillery and below the reach of falling bombs, how eagerly will the sane turn thither when the siren sounds. *“The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe”* (Prov. 18:10). O let every reader who has not yet done so make haste into his closet, fall upon his knees and rise not till he has committed himself wholly unto Christ for time and eternity. Halt no longer between two opinions. The wrath of God is upon thee, and there is but one way of escape: then flee for refuge to the hope set before you in the Gospel (Heb. 6:18). Christ stands ready to receive if you will throw down your weapons of warfare.

2. How diligently you should examine whether or not you are in Christ, the place of eternal security. You should know whether or not you have complied with the requirements of the Gospel, whether or not you have closed with Christ’s gracious offer therein, whether spiritual life has come to your soul, whether you have been made a new creature in Christ. These things may be known with definite certainty. Put these questions to your soul. Had I sincere resolution to forsake my wicked way when I came to Christ? Did I relinquish all dependence upon my own works? Did I come to Him empty-handed, resting on His promise *“him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out?”* Then you may be assured on the infallible Word of God that Christ received you, and you are most grievously insulting Him if you doubt it. Do you value Christ above all the world? Do you

desire to be conformed more and more to His holy image? Is it your earnest endeavour to please Him in all things, and is it your greatest grief and confession to Him when you have displeased Him? Then these are the sure marks of every one who is a member of His mystical Body.

3. How jealously we should watch over and seek to protect this tree of God's planting, from the winds of false doctrine and the pests which would fain destroy it. If we are to do so then we must give due attention to that injunction, "*Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life*" (Prov. 4:23). We must make conscience of everything which is harmful to godliness. We must walk in separation from the world and have "*no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.*" We must feed daily upon the Word of God, for otherwise growth is impossible. We must have regular recourse to the throne of grace, not only to obtain pardoning mercy for the sins committed but to find grace to help for present needs. We must make constant use of the shield of faith for there is no other defence against the fiery darts of Satan. A good beginning is not sufficient: we must press forward unto the things before. A small leak will eventually sink a ship if it be not attended to: many a noble vessel now lies wrecked upon the rocks.

4. How we should beware of wresting this doctrine. Let none encourage themselves in carelessness and fleshly indulgence through presuming upon their security in Christ. It is those who "*hear*" (heed) His voice and that "*follow Him to whom He has made promise*" "*they shall never perish*" (John 10:27, 28). The ones of whom the Lord has declared "*They shall not depart from Me*" are those to whom He said "*I will put My fear in their hearts*" (Jer. 32:40), but He gives no such assurance to those who trifle with Him. God has promised a victory to His people, but that very promise implies a warfare: victories are not gained by neglect and sloth. When Divine grace brings salvation to a soul it teaches him to deny "*ungodliness and worldly lusts*" and to "*live soberly, righteously and godly in this present*

world” (Titus 2:12), and if it is not so teaching me, then I am a stranger to saving grace. There is nothing which has so much forwarded the Arminian error of apostasy as the scandalous lives of professing Christians: see that your life gives the lie to it.

5. How we must ascribe all the glory unto God. If you have stood firm while others have been swept away, if you have held on your way when many who accompanied you at the beginning have forsaken the paths of righteousness, if you have thrived when others have withered, it is due entirely to the distinguishing mercy and power of God. *“Who maketh thee to differ, and what hast thou that thou didst not receive”* (1 Cor. 4:7): you have no cause whatever to boast. *“But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you and keep you from evil”* (2 Thess. 3:3): if the Lord, then not myself. It is true we *“will”* and do, but it is God who worketh both in us (Phil. 2:13). Our sufficiency is of Him and not of ourselves, and due acknowledgment should be made of this; and it will be by real saints. *“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for thy mercy, for Thy truth’s sake”* (Psa. 115:1).

6. How we should magnify the grace of God. The mind is incompetent to perceive how much we are beholden to the Lord for His interest in and care of us. As His providence is virtually a continual creation, an upholding of all things by His ‘power, without which they would lapse back again into nonentity: so the Christian’s preservation is like a continual regeneration, a maintenance of the new creation by the operations of the Spirit and the bestowing fresh supplies of grace. It was the realization of this fact that moved David to acknowledge of God, *“Which holdeth our soul in life and suffereth not our feet to be moved”* (Psa. 66:9). As Charnock well said, “It is a standing miracle in the world that all the floods of temptation shall not be able to quench this little heavenly spark in the heart, that it shall be preserved from being smothered by the streams of sin which arise in us, that a little smoking flax shall burn in spite of all the buckets of water which are poured upon it.” Thus God perfects

His strength in our weakness. *“O give thanks unto the Lord, for His goodness, for His mercy endureth forever”* (Psa. 106:1).

7. How compassionate we should be unto weaker brethren. The more you are mindful of the Lord’s upholding hand, the more compassionate will you be unto those with feeble knees. *“If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted”* (Gal. 6:1). Call to mind how patiently the Lord has borne with you. Remember how ignorant you were but a short time ago, and expect not too much from babes in Christ. Has not the Lord often recovered you when you did wander? Have not your brethren still occasion to bear with many blemishes in you? If so, will you be hyper-critical and censorious toward them! Despise not small grace in any, but seek to encourage, to counsel, to help. Christ does not break the bruised reed, nor must we.

The seventh of seven booklets.

