

### **Paul's Epistle to the Colossians (8) The Need for Perseverance (Col. 1:21-23)**

Last Lord's Day we concluded the paragraph of Colossians 1:15-20, in which the person and work of Jesus Christ is set forth in great, glorious detail. Nine traits of our Lord Jesus were set forth before us. The last of these is in verse 20, in which Jesus Christ is declared to be the Reconciler of fallen creation. In **verse 20** we read of God's work through His Son: "***And through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross***" (v. 20). When Adam sinned in the Garden, all of creation "fell." Nothing was willingly submitted to God even though God continued to manifest His Sovereign Rule through history. But through Jesus Christ, God is returning His creation into willing subjection to God—He is reconciling all things unto Himself. Jesus Christ is reconciling all things unto His Father's will. This will be realized at the end of history, when the Lord Jesus returns, the resurrection of the dead takes place, and the Final Judgment is transacted.

We now arrive to **Colossians 1:21** through **23**, in which we have one sentence (both in the original Greek text and the English ESV text) set forth in one paragraph.

<sup>21</sup>"And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup>He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him, <sup>23</sup>if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister."

Let us stand back from this paragraph and understand how it fits in the greater context, even as it flows forth accomplishing the apostle's purpose in writing this epistle to this church. In these verses the apostle sets before these Christians in the church at Colossae their great guilt in their ingratitude toward God, if they allow themselves to be drawn off of the centrality and sufficiency of Jesus Christ onto other and lesser things, as they were being led to do so by false teachers in their midst.

Paul had stated that he always thanked God for the spiritual life of these Christians, which is expressed in the paragraph of verses 3 through 8. God had rescued them from their fallen condition through the gospel of Jesus Christ that had been proclaimed to them by Epaphras. Paul had learned of their conversion through the gospel from Epaphras whom Paul considered as a fellow minister of Jesus Christ.

But then Paul expressed in the next paragraph, which is contained in verses 9 through 20 (in the Greek text) that he had been continually praying for their spiritual growth. He desired that they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will so that they would be able to walk in a manner worthy of their high calling, living so as to be fully pleasing to the Lord. They would be able to do this by bearing fruit on every good work and by increasing in their knowledge of God. This knowledge was chiefly centered in knowing God through Jesus Christ, whom he then set forth in these beautifully worded verses that we just completed studying, verses 15 through 20. Paul then declared in the paragraph we just read, verses 21 through 23, that God the Father had been working in them and on their behalf through Jesus Christ, reconciling them to Himself, all to the end that they would one day be able to stand before Him in glory, that He will be able "to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him" one day. Interestingly, the apostle Paul added this one qualifier to this goal, it was contingent on these Christians continuing "in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the gospel" which they had heard and embraced.

Another way in which we can consider this larger passage may be seen in this outline:

- (1) Pauls' prayerful activity for the saints (1:9-14)
- (2) God the Son's pre-eminent position before the saints (1:15-18)
- (3) God the Father's redemptive activity through His Son on behalf of the saints (1:19-23)

Let us now look carefully at these verses before us, **Colossians 1:21-23**. God the Father is accomplishing His plan and purpose that He has for His people. Through Jesus Christ, God the Father has reconciled them to Himself. Through Jesus Christ the Father is causing them to become a holy people before Him. Through Jesus Christ the Father is preparing them so that they will be able to be presented before Him “holy, blameless, and above reproach.” Let us work through these assertions.

**1. Their former condition (v. 21).** *“And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,”*

Before we became Christians we were “alienated” from God. The verb form that Paul used serves to show that this characterized us before God reconciled us unto Himself. This was a deeply entrenched alienation on our part toward God and of Him toward us. The form of the participle, “had been alienated”, “expresses more forcibly the settleness of our alienation.”<sup>1</sup> We were committed to our estrangement from God; it was our desire to be so. But not only were we alienated, we were also “hostile.” We were committed to doing “evil deeds” when we lived in this frame of mind. Indeed, all our deeds were evil. Our alienation and hostility were in our “minds.” This is how we thought, how we assessed ourselves-- God, His world, and our place in it. We were estranged from God, not seeing our connection or dependence upon Him for our existence or fulfilment in this life.

We were alienated from God and God was alienated from us. His wrath was upon us. Even when we called out to the Lord in our trouble, because we were under His wrath, our prayers often went unanswered. We were like those in Micah’s day, of whom it was said:

Then they will cry to the LORD,  
But He will not hear them;  
He will even hide His face from them at that time,  
Because they have been evil in their deeds. (Mic. 3:4)

But thankfully that describes our former condition, before we became the people of God through faith in Jesus Christ. We were “once” alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds. Here are **Matthew Henry’s** words,

He is the Mediator of reconciliation, who procures peace as well as pardon for sinners, who brings them into a state of friendship and favour at present, and will bring all holy creatures, angels as well as men, into one glorious and blessed society at last: *things in earth, or things in heaven*. So Ephesians 1:10, *He will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth*. The word is *anakephalaïosasthai*—*he will bring them all under one head*. The Gentiles, who were alienated, and *enemies in their minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*, v. 21. Here see what was their condition by nature, and in their Gentile state—estranged from God, and at enmity with God: and yet this *enmity is slain*, and, notwithstanding this distance, we are now reconciled. Christ has laid the foundation for our reconciliation; for he has paid the price of it, has purchased the proffer and promise of it, proclaims it as a prophet, applies it as a king. Observe, the greatest enemies to God, who have stood at the greatest distance and bidden him defiance, may be reconciled, if it be not their own fault.<sup>2</sup>

**2. Their present condition (v. 22).** *“He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death...”*

God had taken the initiative to reconcile His people unto Himself. God had performed the work necessary for reconciliation between these two disparate and irreconcilable parties—God and sinners. God has reconciled sinners through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Fritz Reinecker, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Regency Reference Library, 1980), p. 569.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Fleming H. Revell), p. 754.

But now the great change has been effected; those who were once far away from God have been brought close to Him; those who used to be at war with Him are now at peace with Him. For Christ has reconciled us to God “in the body of His flesh, through His death.” The historic act accomplished on our behalf once for all by the death of Christ is brought into close relation with what takes place in our own experience when we enter into peace with God, when the work done *for* us is made effective *in* us.<sup>3</sup>

Respecting the matter of God reconciling sinners to Himself, **Arthur Pink** wrote:

We saw that the Author of reconciliation is God, and more particularly, God the Father. In the development of which we pointed out that the recovery of His fallen elect proceeds from the good pleasure of His will or “*the eternal purpose which He purposed in Himself.*” That gracious design was suggested by none other, and no external motive influenced Him. No necessity was put upon Him to form such a resolution: it was simply His own sovereign design—“*I will show mercy.*” Yet it was His own nature which prompted His decision: it originated in the everlasting love which God bore to His elect—a love so great that even their awful sins could not quench nor produce any change in it. Nevertheless, since the Divine holiness was infinitely antagonized by sin, Divine justice required that full satisfaction should be made for the dishonor it had wrought. Naught but Divine wisdom could find a way in which Love and Law were perfectly harmonized and solve the problem of how mercy and justice might alike maintain its ground without the slightest compromise, yea, issue from the conflict honorable and glorious.<sup>4</sup>

God brought reconciliation between Him and us through “the body of His flesh, through His death.” It was God reconciling sinners to Himself through the human nature and body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through His obedience to the law of God, through His death in substitution for us who are deserving of death, God has reconciled us unto Himself. There is no longer enmity between God and those that are in Jesus Christ. There is nothing but enmity between God and those who are outside of Jesus Christ. They remain in their sins, alienated from God and the life that is in Jesus Christ. Again, Pink brings home for us the inability of fallen man alienated from God to effect his own reconciliation with God:

The wrong done by sin unto God was so incalculably enormous and His hatred of the same is so great that only a perfect and infinitely meritorious satisfaction could appease Him, and obviously such a satisfaction could be rendered by none but a person of infinite dignity and worth. Our sins are committed against the infinite Majesty of Heaven and therefore are they infinitely culpable, and unless an atonement of infinite value is made for us, our sins must entail infinite suffering—therefore the punishment of the wicked is necessarily eternal. Sin, so far as it could do so, struck at the very throne of God. It was an act of high treason, a disowning of His authority, an attempt on the part of the creature to overthrow the Divine government. Sin has made such a breach in the order of things appointed by God that no mere creature could possibly repair it—least of all man, for he is the culprit, guilty and defiled. If, then, the breach is to be healed, God must “*lay help upon One that is mighty*” (Psalm 89:19). Writing on “The heinousness of human guilt” **James Hervey** said,

“Ten thousand volumes, written on purpose to display the aggravations of my various acts of disobedience, could not so effectually convince me of their inconceivable enormity as the consideration of that all-glorious Person, who, to make an atonement for them, spilt the last drop of His blood. I have sinned, may every child of Adam say; and what shall I do unto you, O You Observer of men? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Vain commutation, and such as would be rejected by the blessed God with the utmost

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<sup>3</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of Paul to the Ephesians and Colossians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (William B. Eerdmans, 1957), pp. 211.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Pink, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 92.

abhorrence. Will all the potentates, that sway the sceptre in a thousand kingdoms, devote their royal and honored lives to rescue an obnoxious creature, from the stroke of vengeance? Alas, it must cost more, incomparably more, to expiate the malignity of sin and save a guilty wrath from Hell. Will all the principalities of Heaven be content to assume my nature and resign themselves to death for my pardon? Even this would be too mean a satisfaction for inexorable Justice, too scanty a reparation of God's injured honor. "So flagrant is human guilt that nothing but a victim of infinite dignity could constitute an adequate propitiation. He who said '*Let there be light, and there was light,*' let there be a firmament, and immediately the blue curtains floated in the sky; He must take flesh, He must feel the fierce torments of crucifixion and pour out His soul in agonies, if ever such transgressors are pardoned."

There could be no satisfaction for the sinner without atonement, for God has declared He "*will by no means clear the guilty*" (Exodus 34:7). Equally evident is it that no atonement can be made by the violator of God's Law, for he can neither provide reparation for past offences—being a moral bankrupt, devoid of any merit; nor render perfect obedience in the present—being a depraved creature. God's Law requires righteousness of character before it will receive righteousness of conduct, and therefore a fallen creature is utterly disqualified to render acceptable obedience. The Law will not compound with our sinfulness by modifying its holy requirements. "*Pay that which you owe*" is its unchanging demand.<sup>5</sup>

Paul emphasized this act of reconciliation to have taken place in the body of Jesus Christ when He died, in "the body of His flesh, through His death." Perhaps Paul was refuting the teaching that was already circulating in the region that Jesus Christ was not a true man, but only appeared to be like a man, for God cannot become flesh. Paul was asserting that God was reconciling sinners through the death of the physical body of Jesus Christ. But even if Paul himself was not doing so, the Holy Spirit was superintending Paul's writing had him set it forth in this way that would later serve to repudiate full-orbed Gnostic error respecting the person of Jesus Christ. As **William Hendriksen** rightly said,

It should be added, however, that the Holy Spirit who inspired Colossians (as well as the rest of Scripture) foresaw the time when the Docetics (i.e. one form of Gnosticism) would be teaching that Jesus Christ appeared to men in a *spiritual* body, and since he had no physical body only *seemed* to suffer and die on the cross. Colossians 1:22 gives the lie to that theory.<sup>6</sup>

The apostle, after referencing their former condition (v. 21), and then their present condition (v.22a), he then sets forth God's ultimate purpose in His work of reconciliation (v. 22b).

### 3. Their future condition (v. 23).

<sup>21</sup>"And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup>He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, *in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him,*"

Here we read of God's purpose of reconciling His people unto Himself through the death of Jesus Christ. It was in order that He will be able to "*present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him.*" God will be successful in accomplishing this purpose of His in every soul who has been reconciled unto Himself through the death of Jesus Christ. This was the end to which reconciliation was directed. Through the death of Jesus Christ and the reconciliation that secured between our God and us, He has secured our future entrance into a state of our glorification. This is not just for some Christians, the devoted

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pp. 100, 101.

<sup>6</sup> William Hendriksen, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philipians, Colossians, and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary (Baker, Academic, 1964), p. 84.

and dedicated, the so-called “sold-out” Christians. God will see to it that every Christian will be presented before Him as one who is “holy, blameless, and above reproach.”

Now this presentation by God of us in His presence in this manner will take place when we are summoned before the Lord Jesus Christ in judgment. God “has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained”, even Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31). We speak of this matter often, the future general resurrection of all human beings, all being summoned before Jesus Christ who will judge every individual according to his works. The outcome of that judgment will either be His granting entrance into everlasting life or His consigning to everlasting punishment in hell.

Contrary to the teaching of most evangelicals, who have been taught that true believers will not have to undergo such a judgment, we hold as all Protestants have held until the last 150 years or so, that there will be a general judgment of all humanity, which is a judgment according to works. Our confession of faith states the matter rightly:

God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ; to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father; in which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon the earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds, and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.<sup>7</sup>

Most evangelicals are taught that they will not have any part in the judgment in which Jesus Christ will consign people to hell. They are told that their judgment for rewards will be 1007 years before the Great White Throne Judgment when all the unsaved, and they only, will be judged. But this is not what the Scriptures teach. There will be a general judgment of all mankind. On that Day our works will either damn us or they will exonerate us. Our works will not be meritorious, of course, they could never be so. But they are evidentiary. They provide confirming evidence before all that we are true believers in Jesus Christ, that we are not heretics, hypocrites, or apostates, but rather true believers. Paul taught this future judgment according to works very clearly in **Romans 2:5-11**. Of hypocrites Paul wrote:

<sup>5</sup>But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, <sup>6</sup>who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: <sup>7</sup>eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; <sup>8</sup>but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness-- indignation and wrath, <sup>9</sup>tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; <sup>10</sup>but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>11</sup>For there is no partiality with God. (Rom. 2:5-11).

Our Lord Jesus said the same thing regarding a general judgment of mankind, and did so in a very condensed way:

<sup>28</sup>Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice <sup>29</sup>and come forth-- *those who have done good*, to the resurrection of life, and *those who have done evil*, to the resurrection of condemnation. (John 5:28-29)

Now we emphasize this doctrine because it is not taught commonly or widely. It should cause us to be watchful for ourselves. It should move us to be responsive to the Lord according to His Word, seeking to be, purposing to be, found in Him when He comes. As Peter exhorted his Christian readers:

<sup>13</sup>Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and *rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*; <sup>14</sup>*as obedient children*, not conforming

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<sup>7</sup> **The Baptist Confession of 1689**, Art. 32, par. 1. These verses are given as proof of this doctrine: Acts 17:31; John 5:22, 27; 1 Corinthians 6:3; Jude 6; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecc. 12:14; Matt. 12:36; Rom. 14:10; Matt. 25:32-46.

yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; <sup>15</sup>but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup> because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” <sup>17</sup>And if you call on the Father, *who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear*; <sup>18</sup>knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, <sup>19</sup>but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (1 Pet. 1:13-19)

Now when it says that we are to live “in fear”, God not intend for us to live in terror of that day, but rather in reverential fear. For if a true Christian is fearful of that Day of Judgment that is coming upon the world, he or she is not thinking rightly. For God has purposed in Jesus Christ through His death to “*present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him.*” This is His work, not your or mind, thankfully. When our works are examined, and it is demonstrated that God had wrought a work of saving grace in our lives as seen in our words, attitudes, and actions, we will stand fully, completely, “holy, blameless, and above reproach before Him.” You will stand having the righteousness of Jesus Christ credited to you in your judgment, so that even your weak, flawed, imperfect “works” will be shown to have been wrought by God. God will see to it that believer’s “deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (Joh 3:21). In fact, because of our standing in Jesus Christ through faith alone, not only may we not be in terror respecting our judgment, but we may actually be bold in Christ to stand before Him in judgment. **1 John 4:17** reads, “Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.”

The grandfather of Jonathan Edwards, **Solomon Stoddard**, for 60 years pastored the congregational church in Northampton, Massachusetts. Jonathan Edwards became the pastor after his grandfather. Stoddard wrote a wonderful book with a wonderful title that every true Christian should take to heart: *Safety of Appearing on the Day of Judgment in the Righteousness of Christ*. Here is the table of contents, which itself reveals to us this matter:

Chapter 1: The Introduction, showing the difficulty of believing this truth

Chapter 2: Two things premised

Chapter 3: The proposition—that it is a safe thing to appear in the righteousness of Christ. The first argument is because Christ’s righteousness is the righteousness of the law.

Chapter 4: The second argument from the prophecies and types of the Old Testament. The third argument from God’s love in giving His Son to die for us. The fourth argument from the Exaltation of Christ

Chapter 5: The fifth argument from the promise of salvation to all those that believe in the righteousness of Christ. The sixth argument from the command to believe Christ’s righteousness.

Chapter 6: The seventh argument, from the Spirit’s assuring men of the truth of the gospel. The eighth argument, from God bestowing the beginnings of salvation in believers here in this world.

Chapter 7: The ninth argument from the Sacraments of the New Testament. Now added, the tenth argument, the conversion of sinners by the gospel an evidence of the truth of this doctrine. Eleventh argument, the pouring out of the spirit in the time of the Primitive Church. Two objections against this doctrine answered.

Chapter 8: USE 1. Reproof to those who seek salvation by their own righteousness

Chapter 9: USE 2. Examination. Whether men believe in the righteousness of Christ

Chapter 10: USE 3. Exhortation to awakened sinners to believe on the righteousness of Christ Jesus.

Chapter 11: USE 4. Exhortation to saints to live by faith upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ for your acceptance.

We need not be fearful of the Day of Judgment, if we are thinking and walking rightly, in fellowship with our Savior and His people. But rather as Christians we may anticipate it as a Day when our profession will be vindicated, our detractors will be corrected, we will be owned by our Lord as His brethren, of whom He is not ashamed.

But then we read in Colossians 1:23 that this purpose of God for our glorification is...

#### **4. Their future blessing of salvation was contingent upon their faithfulness to Jesus Christ (v. 23)**

<sup>21</sup>“And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup>He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him, <sup>23</sup>*if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard,...*”

The apostle set forth the absolute necessity to persevere in faith in the Lord Jesus. There is no promise of salvation for the temporary believer, the apostate. Salvation belongs to those who have true faith. True faith is an ongoing, overcoming, persevering faith in the Lord Jesus. Here we see a condition set before us for our salvation. This condition does not put our salvation in doubt. This condition does not mean that our salvation ultimately is due to what we do or do not do. This condition certainly does not mean that a true Christian can lose his salvation. But it is a true condition that all true Christians meet, by the grace of God.

The Holy Scriptures tell us in many places and in many ways that the Lord will keep His people in faith. He does so by His power. Those that are Christ's, who have salvation, “are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet. 1:5). Perseverance in faith and obedience is the grand distinguishing mark of a true child of God.

Here is a formal definition of the doctrine of perseverance of the saints:

***Those who are the elect of God, who are recipients of God's effectual call, having been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, led to repent of sin and believe on Christ for salvation, shall never fall away so as to perish, but will be kept by the power of God unto the salvation which is reserved for them in heaven.***

The doctrine of perseverance does not mean that everyone who professes to believe or believes for a while is saved eternally. This has reference to the elect of God, true believers who are truly born again, whose lives bear evidence of the presence of saving faith.

Consequently, the common expression, “the eternal security of the believer” is somewhat a misnomer. Perhaps better, “the eternal security of the true believer” would be better. But the expression “eternal security” should probably be distinguished from the expression, “the perseverance of the saints.” The former expression is often stressed with only respect to what Christ has done on behalf of the Christian-- due to His perfect sacrifice the Christian who is once forgiven, is forever forgiven. But “the perseverance of the saints” also involves what Christ does “in” a person, thereby enabling him/her to persevere unto the end.

Here is the statement of the doctrine from the **First London Confession, 1646**, article 23:

All those that have this precious faith wrought in them by the Spirit, can never finally nor totally fall away; seeing the gifts of God are without repentance; so that He still begets and nourishes in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit unto immortality; and though many storms and floods arise, and beat against them, yet they shall never be able to take them off that foundation and rock, which by faith they are fastened upon; not withstanding, through unbelief, and the temptations of

Satan, the sensible sight of this light and love, be clouded and overwhelmed for a time; yet God is still the same, and they shall be sure to be kept by the power of God unto salvation, where they shall enjoy their purchased possession, they being engraven upon the palms of His hands, and their names having been written in the book of life from all eternity.

Here is the statements from **The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689**, which is essentially the same as the Westminster Confession):

1. Those whom God has accepted in the Beloved, and has effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, and given the precious faith of His elect, can neither totally, nor finally fall from the state of grace, but they will certainly persevere in that state to the end and be eternally saved. This is because the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, and therefore He continues to beget and nourish in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit which lead to immortality (John 10:28-29; Phil 1:6; 2 Tim 2:19; 1 John 2:19). And though many storms and floods arise and beat against the saints, yet these things shall never be able to sweep them off the foundation and rock which they are fastened upon by faith. Even though, through unbelief and the temptations of Satan, the sight and feeling of the light and love of God may for a time be clouded and obscured from them (Psa. 89:31-32; 1 Cor. 11:32), yet God is still the same, and they are sure to be kept by His power until their salvation is complete, when they shall enjoy the purchased possession which is theirs, for they are engraved upon the palm of His hands, and their names have been written in His Book of Life from all eternity (Mal. 3:6).

2. This perseverance of the saints does not depend on them - that is, on their own free will. It rests upon the immutability of the decree of election (Rom 8:30; 9:11-16), which flows from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father. It also rests upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, and upon the union which true saints have with Him (Rom 5:9-10; John 14:19). It rests upon the oath of God (Heb 6.17-18), and upon the abiding of His Spirit. It depends upon the seed of God being within them (1 John 3:9) and upon the very nature of the covenant of grace (Jer. 32:40). All these factors give rise to the certainty and infallibility of the security and perseverance of the saints.

3. The saints may, through the temptation of Satan and the world, and because their remaining sinful tendencies prevail over them, and through their neglect of the means which God has provided to keep them, fall into grievous sins. They may continue in this state for some time (Matt 26:70-74), so that they incur God's displeasure, grieve His Holy Spirit (Isa. 64:5-9; Eph. 4:30), suffer the impairment of their graces and comforts (Psa. 51:10-12), have their hearts hardened and their consciences wounded (Psa. 32:3-4), and hurt and scandalize others. By this they will bring temporal judgments upon themselves (2 Sam 12:14). Yet they shall renew their repentance and be preserved, through faith in Christ Jesus, to the end (Luke 22:32; 61-62).

How does God keep His own? In several ways. First, God enables His own to persevere through giving them new birth. God gives to His elect a nature which loves God, aspires to holiness, detests sin; which, although abides alongside the fallen nature, nevertheless causes the heart to move to know God, please Him, doing His will (cf. Jer. 32:37-42; Ezek. 36:22-27). Second, God enables His own to persevere by His acts of providence in their lives (cf. Rom. 8:28; 2 Peter 2:7-10). Third, God enables His own to persevere through His acts of chastisement (Heb. 12:3-7).

The Scriptures are replete with statements that address this matter. **There are those verses that speak of God's ability to keep His own in faith.**

**Philippians 3:20, 21** -- "For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, (that it may be) conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby *He is able* even to subject all things unto himself."

**2 Timothy 1:12** -- “For which cause I suffer also these things: yet I am not ashamed; for I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that *he is able to guard* that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

**Jude 24, 25** -- “Now unto him that *is able to guard you from stumbling*, and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, (be) glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore. Amen.

**There are those verses which speaks of the *certainty* of God keeping His own.**

**Job 17:9** -- “The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.”

**Jeremiah 32:37-42** -- “Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul.” “For thus says the LORD: ‘Just as I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will bring on them all the good that I have promised them.’”

**Ezekiel 36:22-27** -- “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD,” says the Lord GOD, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

**John 6:35-40** -- “Jesus said unto them: ‘I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, that ye have seen me, and yet believe not. All that which the Father gives me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me *I will in no wise cast out*. For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And *this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing*, but should raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that *every one* that beholds the Son, and *believeth* on him, *should have eternal life*; and I will raise him up at the last day.’”

**John 10:27, 28** -- “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and *they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand*.”

**John 17:1, 2** -- “Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that the son may glorify You: even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that *to all whom You hast given Him, He should give eternal life*.”

**Romans 8:28-30** -- “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

**1 Corinthians 1:8, 9** -- “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the *grace of God which is given you* by Jesus Christ; that in every thing you are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that you come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: *Who shall also confirm you unto the end*, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. *God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

**Philippians 1:6** -- “*Being confident* of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you *will perfect it* until the day of Jesus Christ.”

**2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14** -- “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto *He called you* through our gospel, *to the obtaining of the glory* of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24** -- “And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body *be preserved entire*, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Faithful is he that called you, who will also do it.*”

**2 Timothy 4:18** -- “The Lord *will* deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

**1 Peter 1:4, 5** -- “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, *reserved in heaven for you*, who *by the power of God* are guarded through faith *unto a salvation* ready to be revealed in the last time.”

**1 John 2:1** -- “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, *they would no doubt have continued with us*: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

**Jude 1** -- “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are *called*, beloved in God the Father, and *kept for Jesus Christ.*”

But even though it is God who keeps His people secure so that they will persevere, the Scriptures also speak of the Christian’s responsibility to keep Himself in faith to Christ. This is what we have before us in Colossians 1:22 and 23.

<sup>22</sup>He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him, <sup>23</sup>*if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard...*”

Here are some other verses that speak of this great responsibility that we have to persevere by God’s grace:

**1 Timothy 4:16** -- “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. *Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.*”

**1 Corinthians 15:1ff** -- “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, <sup>2</sup>by which also you are saved, *if you hold fast that word which I preached to you-- unless you believed in vain.*”

**Hebrews 10:35-39** -- “Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. <sup>36</sup>*For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:* <sup>37</sup>For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. <sup>38</sup>Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. <sup>39</sup>But *we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.*”

**5. This faithfulness is to the gospel that has been widely proclaimed** (v. 23b), “which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

Paul reasoned that the Lord had sent His gospel into all the world. He was accomplishing the good purposes of His Father through the gospel, and these believers in the church of Colossae were part of this glorious work of God, as we are, we who have embraced Jesus Christ through faith.

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Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:20f)

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Here are a few words of **Charles Spurgeon** on the subject of the believer’s reconciliation by God through Jesus Christ:

*“Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”*  
— *Romans 5. 10.*

THE first great message of mercy to a sinner is put into four short words in the eighth verse of this chapter: “Christ died for us.” A preacher can never be wrong in lifting up Christ crucified; it is the glory of a congregation if it can be truly said, “Before your eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you.” Well did the apostle make this his boast: “We preach Christ crucified.” Still, we must always remember that there is a great deal about Christ beside his crucifixion; and however glorious his death may be, — and we are not disposed to rank it second to anything else, — yet there is another glory, another form of his excellency, which is seen, not in his death, but in his life. It is of this that the apostle speaks here: “Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Before we come to the consideration of that subject, dear friends, let us think of what the death of Christ has done for some of us. The former part of the verse from which our text is taken says, “When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” What was that reconciliation? Wherein did it consist? We will not talk so much doctrinally, as practically, and experimentally. We were once enemies to God, but we are not enemies to God any longer. God was once angry with us, but God is not angry with us any more. If we have believed in Jesus Christ, a complete reconciliation has been effected between the offended God and the offending sinner. In this reconciliation, I see, first, that God, who is always love, and has always loved his people, being just, was unable to deal with the guilty sinner except upon the footing of justice, and justice demanded that the sinning soul should die; but Christ has come that God, as the great moral Ruler, might be able, without violation of his holiness to deal mercy with sinful men. Let there be no mistake about the object and purpose of Christ’s sacrifice. **John Kent’s** hymn rightly says, —

*“’Twas not to make Jehovah’s love  
Towards the sinner flame,*

*That Jesus from his throne above,  
A suffering man became.  
“Twas not the death which he endured,  
Nor all the pangs he bore,  
That God’s eternal love procured,  
For God was love before.”*

He was always love to his people; but, until Christ came to earth and died, the Just for the unjust, that love could not flow freely. There was a dam that blocked up the stream, there was a great rock in the channel, and the rivers of love could not flow; but by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, that impediment has been removed. God can now be “just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” I have already said that, in his heart of hearts, there was always love towards his people; but as the Judge upon the judgment-seat, he could not display that love, he could only manifest his indignation against every soul of man that does evil. Now, this most righteous wrath of God was removed by the death of Jesus Christ, and could not have been removed any other manner. The sword must find its victim, and Christ bared his breast to let infinite justice spend its full force on him. The debt had to be paid, and Jesus paid it to the last farthing with his own life which he poured out upon the tree. The cup of wrath must be drained, there was no putting it aside; so Jesus took it, and after saying, “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done,” he put it to his lips, and never took it away till he had drained it to its last drop. There was a necessity for Christ’s death, “it behoved Christ to suffer;” and by his suffering he appeased the wrath of the great Judge of all, so that he could justly look upon guilty men with complacency. That wondrous change was wrought by Christ’s death, and now the very justice of God demands our salvation. It is indeed marvelous that the righteousness of God, which was against us, should be made to be for us, and that the justice of God, which pronounced the sentence of death upon us, should be so transformed that justice itself now decrees our eternal life. This is a wonderful part of the reconciliation.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Charles Spurgeon, **The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit**, vol. 44, sermon # 2587, “Much More” (Pilgrim Publications), pp. 587ff (pdf version).