

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Salvation, Session 20, Preservation and Perseverance, Part 4, Systematic Formulations, Apostasy, Eternal Life, Glory

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Salvation. This is session 20, Preservation and Perseverance, Part 4, Systematic Formulations, Apostasy, Eternal Life, Glory.

We're studying God's Preservation of His Saints, which is complemented by the Biblical teaching; the Saints Must Persevere in Faith, Love, and Holiness, which is attached to the Biblical teaching, God assures His people, gives them confidence of final salvation, as they trust His word, and experience the internal witness of the Spirit, and watch Him work in their lives.

The fourth doctrine to tie together in this sequence, in this group of doctrines, Preservation, Perseverance, and Assurance, is Apostasy. Assurance and Apostasy are theological topics related to Preservation and Perseverance. Having treated Assurance, we turn to the latter.

Apostasy, by definition, is a departure from a previously professed faith. In the Christian context, it is a departure from a previously professed faith in Christ. Scripture contains warnings of apostasy.

However, warnings have many other functions, too. One half of my book, *Our Secure Salvation*, one-half deals with Preservation passages, and the other second half deals with warning passages. Here are the major functions of warning passages in the New Testament.

The major one I found, I was somewhat surprised, is to differentiate true from false believers. Matthew 7:16-23, Luke 8:4-15, John 15:1-8, Acts 8:13 and 8:20-24, Romans 8:13. The major function of warning passages in the New Testament is to distinguish true from false believers. Matthew 7:16-23, Luke 8:4-15, John 15:1-8, Acts 8:13 and 8:20-24, Romans 8:13. Another function of warning passages is to uncover deficient faith.

John 2:23-25, 1 Timothy 1:3-7, 1 Timothy 1:18-20, 2 Timothy 2:11-13. To uncover, to reveal deficient faith. John 2:25-27, 1 Timothy 1:3-7, 1 Timothy 1: 18-20, 2 Timothy 2:11-13.

Another function of warning passages is to warn against refusing the Gospel. Matthew 10:33, 1 Timothy 4:1-5, 2 Timothy 2:17-19. To warn against refusing the Gospel.

Matthew 10: 33, 1 Timothy 4:1-5, 2 Timothy 2:17-19. Another function of warning passages is to unmask unsaved persons who seem to be saved. 1 Timothy 5:8, 1 Timothy 5:11-12, 2 Peter 2:20-22, 1 John 5:16-17, Revelation 22:18-19. To unmask unsaved persons who seem to be saved.

1 Timothy 5:8, 1 Timothy 5:11-12, 2 Peter 2:20-22, 1 John 5:16-17, Revelation 22:18-19. To show God's hatred of sin. Acts 5:5-10, James 5:19-20. Some warning passages show God's hatred of sin. Acts 5:5 and 5:10, James 5:19-20. At least one passage warns of disqualification from office.

1 Corinthians 9:27, Paul fears his sins, potential sins could disqualify him from the office of Apostle. To warn of disqualification from office. 1 Corinthians 9:27. For exegesis supporting this view, see Wolf, V-O-L-F, Judith, Gundry, Wolf, Paul, and Perseverance, 2:33, 2:36. Another function of the warning passages, you can already see it is not a simple matter.

The warning passages have multiple functions, different functions. To warn of temporal judgments. 1 Corinthians 11:32. Some of you are weak and some of you are sick.

Some of you sleep, a euphemism for God's temporal judgment of death. To warn of temporal judgments. 1 Corinthians 11:32. There are more than these, but I have just taken a representative 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 different functions of warning passages that establishes my point.

That it's not a simple matter of counting noses. Oh, all these warning passages warn of apostasy. No, but some do.

To emphasize the need for perseverance. Colossians 1:23, Hebrews 6:4-8, Hebrews 10:26-38. To emphasize the need for perseverance. Colossians 1:23, Hebrews 6:4-8, Hebrews 10:26-38. The New Testament warns, no question about it.

The New Testament warns of the danger of apostasy for those who claim to know Christ. Matthew 24:9-10. Then they will hand you over to be persecuted and they will kill you. You'll be hated by all nations because of my name, Jesus said.

Then many will fall away, betray one another, and hate one another. Matthew 24:9-10. 1 Timothy 4:1. Now the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons. 1

Timothy 4:1. Hebrews 3:12. Watch out, brothers, so that there won't be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

Hebrews 3:12. 1 John 2:19, a very important passage because it correlates preservation and apostasy. They went out from us, the false teachers did, but they did not belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us.

1 John 2:19. Systematizing, preservation, perseverance, assurance, and apostasy. The Bible does not provide a complete systematic theology, but it partially systematizes certain doctrines. It does this for preservation and apostasy.

Scripture correlates preservation and perseverance. God's word teaches that God preserves his people. He keeps them so that they do not fall away from the faith totally and, finally, to use St. Augustine's adverbs.

Scripture also teaches that God's people must persevere in faith, love, and holiness to attain final salvation. How can we correlate these two truths? We cannot perfectly correlate them because they are a subset of the biblically revealed mystery of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. I think I've spoken about that enough to say that this is one of those problems.

The doctrine of the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, are essential tensions or paradoxes in Scripture. God's sovereignty and human responsibility are not essential, but they seem to me to be equally mysterious. D. A. Carson agrees.

See his books *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* and then a more popular book, *How Long, O Lord? Christian Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, something like that. He's got a chapter on the mystery of providence and the one after it in which he shows passage after passage within the Bible, a tension is created between God's sovereignty and human responsibility. The tension is not relieved, and just like the doctrine of the Trinity and the two natures in the person of Christ, what we do is set forth the biblical teachings in tension.

We exclude errors on both sides, and we live with the tension. What errors would we exclude on both sides of divine sovereignty and human responsibility? First of all, God is sovereign. He foreordains and then does his will in whatever comes to pass.

At the same token, human beings are responsible. It matters whether we believe in Christ or not. It matters as Christians whether we share the gospel or not.

It matters whether we pray or not, and sometimes, these things overlap. So, the same actions have dual causation. They are the acts of human beings, even

sometimes sinful acts, the crucifixion of the Son of God, the betrayal of the Son of God, Caiaphas' part in that, the Jews crying out for Jesus' blood.

At the same time, that same act, the crucifixion, was planned by God before the creation of the world. 1 Peter 1, the Son was foreknown in his crucifixion, his redemptive work, the redemption through his blood, and, of course, the cross was planned by God. So, Acts 4, by the hands of evil men, what God had predestined came about.

We exclude, on the one hand, God is absolutely sovereign, but we exclude fatalism. The difference between fatalism and the Bible's teaching that God is sovereign over whatever comes to pass is that God in the scripture is a person with a character. We are not at the whims of the Greek fates.

It is not true whatever will be will be. We just fold our hands and resign ourselves. No, God is the creator, the sustainer, the redeemer, the consummator. He works by his providence.

We've never denied this is mysterious, but it is not fatalism. We're dealing not with impersonal fates and forces but with the living and true God who is eternal and personal. On the other side, there is genuine human responsibility.

As I said previously in these lectures, I'm positive that the basis of God sending people to hell is their sins. The full presentation, their sinful thoughts, words, and deeds. Shorthand, usually just their erga, their works, their deeds, their actions.

Over and over again, in every passage, whether it uses that exact terminology or not, people are judged according to what they have done and condemned for what they've done against a holy and just God. What parameter do we set on that side? We must even as we cancel out fatalism on the one side of God's sovereignty, on the side of human responsibility, we must cancel out what the philosophers call absolute power to the contrary. Our actions are significant.

As I said, it matters whether people believe in Jesus or not, for example. But we cannot bring the creator's plan tumbling down upon itself. We do not have absolute power to the contrary.

We are the creatures. We do not undermine God's sovereign plan. So, it matters whether I witness or not, right? Right.

If I don't witness, is that going to cancel God's plan for the evangelization of the world? Are you kidding? No, he's the Lord. Yes, I'm in rebellion against him if that's the case. And I won't be blessed, and God won't use me, but it doesn't mean he won't use anyone.

So, the creature ultimately does not frustrate the creator's will. Does this solve all our problems? No, it's a mystery. How in the world the crucifixion of Jesus is the greatest crime and the greatest act of God, along with his resurrection to bring the greatest good to the greatest number?

I don't understand, but I believe what God has said. God's preservation causes our perseverance. Preservation and perseverance stand in this relationship, this relation.

Preservation causes perseverance. So, if we stand behind preservation, there's a causal relationship. If we stand behind perseverance and look back, perseverance is the result of God's preservation.

That is, it's the fruit, the result, the evidence sometimes of God's keeping his people. I don't have time to give detailed notes on all of these points. Not only does God's preservation keep us saved, but our perseverance is a fruit of preservation.

If we begin with God, we note that he preserves his people. His preservation is the ultimate cause of our perseverance. There are many proximate causes, but the ultimate cause is God's grace, his overcoming grace.

If we begin with humans, we note that God's preservation bears fruit in our lives, including perseverance. Thus, our perseverance is a confirmation of his keeping us. Many passages confirm this.

Jesus spoke of false prophets and twice warned, you'll recognize them by their fruit. Matthew 7:16, and 20. Scripture itself relates to preservation, perseverance, assurance, and apostasy.

It does so in New Testament books. The Bible brings together these preservation, perseverance, and apostasy in a way that helps us understand them and their interrelation. The same New Testament books teach all three doctrines.

Preservation, Luke 22:31 and 32. Perseverance, Luke 8:4 to 15. Apostasy, Luke 21:16 through 19.

Preservation, John 6:37 to 44. John 10:26 to 30. Perseverance, John 15:1 to 8. Apostasy, John 13:21 through 30.

Preservation, Romans 5:9 and 10. Romans 8:31 to 39. Perseverance, Romans 8:13.

Apostasy, Romans 11:17 to 21. The same is true in 1 Corinthians. I won't read those.

Hebrews, preservation, Hebrews 6:13 to 20. Hebrews 7:23 to 25. Perseverance, Hebrews 10:36.

Apostasy, Hebrews 3:14. Hebrews 10:26 to 39. Preservation, 1 John 5:18.

Perseverance, 1 John 5:16, 17. Apostasy, 1 John 2:19. New Testament writers spoke of God's preservation, the saints' perseverance, and apostasy without fear of contradiction.

They believe that God kept his people safe and also believe that believers, they also believe that believers must continue to the end in faith, love, and holiness and that some people defect from the faith. Unless we would accuse them of contradicting themselves, which I would not, they did not intend the necessity of perseverance and the warnings of apostasy to cancel the truth of preservation. They did not intend the truth of preservation to lessen the need for believers to persevere.

They also did not intend their teaching of preservation to nullify the warnings of apostasy. We cannot perfectly correlate these three doctrines. Preservation is the cause of perseverance.

Perseverance is one of the evidences of preservation. As I said earlier, although scriptural warnings have many purposes, a primary one is to distinguish true from false believers. As stated previously, apostolic urging for the saints to persevere and warnings of apostasy are among the means God uses to preserve his people.

Nevertheless, we bow to the mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility and cannot explain their dynamic interplay completely. One passage in particular integrates perseverance and apostasy. 1 John 2:18 and 19.

Children, it is the last hour, and as you've heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now, many Antichrists have come. By this, we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not belong to us.

For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. However, they went out so that it might be made clear that none of them belonged to us. 1 John 2:18 and 19.

The theme of Antichrist shares with many biblical themes the feature of being already and not yet. The end-time Antichrist figure has not yet appeared, but John could say that already in the first century, quote, many Antichrists have come. Verse 18.

John identifies them as false teachers who had attended the Johannine churches. They outwardly belonged to Christ and his people but did not belong in a deeper

sense. They outwardly appeared to be Christians, but their apostasy revealed they were false believers.

Verse 19. John's words are telling. If they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. This is a second-class Greek conditional condition.

If they had belonged to us, but they didn't, they would have remained with us, but they didn't. Genuine believers, in other words, persevere. They do not apostatize.

And that's how you say the verb, not apostatize. Those who apostatize reveal they were never genuine believers. One New Testament passage ties together preservation, perseverance, assurance, and apostasy.

Hebrews 6:1 through 20. Here is the big picture. Hebrews 6, 1 to 3 gives an exhortation to persevere.

Hebrews 6, verses 4 through 6 gives a strong warning of apostasy. Verses 7 through 10 give assurance that the majority of my readers are saved. 11 and 12 of Hebrews 6 gives an exhortation to persevere, to strengthen assurance.

Verses 13 to 20 of Hebrews 6 give strong assurance of preservation. After a rebuke, some analysis, after a rebuke of their spiritual immaturity in chapter 5:11 through 14, the writer exhorts the readers to perseverance in 6, 1 to 3. Therefore, let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, verse 1. There follows a strong warning of apostasy, as is found in the Holy Scriptures. Quote, for it is impossible to renew to repentance those who experience great spiritual blessings, my summary, and who have fallen away.

This is because, to their own harm, they are crucifying the Son of God and holding him up to contempt, verses 4 through 6. Next, the writer gives an illustration of two kinds of land. Both receive the reign of God's blessing, and the first produces good vegetation, which God blesses, but the second produces only thorns and thistles, is worthless, and God is ready to curse it and burn it, verses 7 through 8. The two types of land represent true and false believers, respectively. The writer wants his readers to identify with the first type of land and to persevere.

After the strong warning and discriminating illustration, the writer offers the majority of his readers encouraging words in verses 9 and 10. Even though we're speaking this way, dearly loved friends, in your case, we are confident of things that are better and that pertain to salvation, verse 9. He warns the whole congregation of apostasy, knowing that some are contemplating it, while he remains confident in the majority of their salvation and perseverance. Again, he exhorts them to persevere so as to increase their assurance.

Quote, now we desire each of you to demonstrate the same diligence for the full assurance of your hope until the end, so that you won't become lazy but will become imitators of those who inherit the promises through faith and perseverance, verses 11 and 12. Often neglected, the next eight verses make a strong case for God's preservation of his saints. I previously summarized these arguments, showing that God grants believers final salvation.

Here, I just list them. By promising it, 6:13. Confirming the promise with an oath, verse 14. Labeling his resolve unchangeable, 17.

Reminding us of his veracity, verse 18. Calling our hope of salvation an anchor of the soul, verse 19. Three times describing his anchor as utterly reliable, 19.

Teaching that Christ, our forerunner, has already entered heaven for us, 19 to 20. And he was affirming the eternity of Christ's priesthood, verse 20. The author of the Hebrews concludes the four doctrines and correlates the four doctrines, and the writer the Hebrews, correlates these four doctrines in one extended context to minister to his readers.

In doing so, he increases our understanding. Putting preservation last and treating it extensively underscores the fact that genuine believers cannot fall away. God preserves his people for final salvation.

The author regards exhortations to persevere and warnings of apostasy as compatible with preservation. As a pastor, he knows churches are a mixture of believers and unbelievers. Every church member needs encouragement and admonition to persevere in faith, love, and holiness.

Some need the strong medicine of God's word to awaken them from the illness of spiritual lethargy. Christians need a robust assurance that comes from God's promises, the Spirit's ministry within, and their walking with him. Church leaders must faithfully love their flock by exhorting them to continue in the faith, warning them of the danger of apostasy, and encouraging the majority to live in assurance.

Conclusion. As we have seen, God is the beginning, middle, and end of our salvation. God's grace begins it, and God's grace will complete it.

We will persevere in holiness because God perseveres in grace. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, his sermon, All of Grace. And in the meantime, God's grace provides the fuel for our spiritual journey.

Spurgeon said it well: between here and heaven, every minute that the Christian lives will be a minute of grace. When we are in need, God's grace gives us boldness.

Let us then, with confidence, draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

When we are in sin, God's grace fosters our repentance and promotes our holiness. Quote: the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age. Titus 2:11 and 12.

When we need strength to keep on serving God, God's grace enables us as Paul testifies. Quote, I worked harder than any of them, the apostles, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. First Corinthians 15:11.

When we are tired and weak, God's grace fortifies us as Paul attests. Quote, my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. When we began these lectures, we said we were dealing with the application of salvation with two exceptions: the first topic and the last.

The first was God's election, which is certainly not part of the application of salvation, but it's very much God's planning of salvation before the creation of the world. Here at the end of dealing with these particular doctrines, before we try to correlate them with some bigger biblical themes, but here at the end of the dealing discreetly with the different doctrines, we again go this time, not before, but beyond the application of salvation and deal with eternal life and glorification. Here is a biblical summary of the Bible's teaching on eternal life.

In the Old Testament, life typically refers to physical life and blessing. Though the phrase eternal life occurs in Daniel 12:3, other texts also foreshadow it occurs only in Daniel 12:3, the very expression of eternal life. Other texts also foreshadow New Testament teaching, especially those that predict the resurrection of the dead and some Psalms that use the words life or forever.

New Testament writers sometimes used Old Testament words for physical life, typologically of life in the age to come. Outside of the Johannine writings, eternal life in the New Testament mostly looks forward to the Eschaton, to life in the age to come, when believers will enjoy life forever with God in and through Jesus Christ. We see this eschatological emphasis in Jude 21, quote, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting expectantly for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life, close quote.

Believers wait for the mercy that will be poured on them on the last day, and the reward will be eternal life on that day. John, however, stresses that believers enjoy eternal life now during this present evil age. The gift of the end time has already penetrated this current age.

Such life will be consummated at the resurrection, but believers can be assured now that they possess eternal life. The Eschaton has invaded this age. The life of the future is given to those who trust Jesus Christ now, at least in anticipation of the future, to those who follow him as his disciples in profession and life.

A brief biblical summary of glorification. Glorification in the New Testament is clearly a future blessing, though one passage shows it to be a present one, too. Second, Corinthians 3:18, 318, which speaks of believers progressing from glory to glory now by God's grace.

Nevertheless, believers don't now possess the full glory that will be theirs when Christ returns. The promise of glory encourages believers during present sufferings, reminding them of the splendor and beauty awaiting them. Glory is guaranteed for those who are foreknown, predestined, called, and justified.

Those whom God has called will certainly receive eternal glory since the God who called them will strengthen them to the end, and the ultimate end of believers' glorification is that God might be eternally praised for lavishing such grace on them. I have some brief notes on eternal life and glorification, as well as systematic formulations. Here are my heads.

Restored to glory. Characterized by glory, past, present, and future. Conformed to Christ's image.

Participation in Christ's glory. Alive with glorified bodies. Dwelling in a renewed creation.

Systematic formulations, eternal life, and glorification. Restored to glory. We were created in the image of God to worship and display God, but we all refused to acknowledge God's glory and instead sought our own glory.

Through this, we forfeited the glory God intended for us as his image bearers. By his grace and through union with Christ, the perfect image, however, God saves us, restoring us as full image bearers to participate in and reflect the glory we longed for the whole time. Thus, we are recipients of glory, are undergoing transformation through glory, and will be sharers of glory.

Our salvation is not merely from sin but also from glory. We who exchange the glory of God for idols, we who rebelled against God's glory, have been, are being, and will be completely transformed by the very glory we despised and rejected. Romans 1:18 to 31.

Romans 3:23. Romans 8:28 to 30. Romans 9:23.

2 Corinthians 3:18. One more time. Romans 1:18 to 31. Romans 3:23. Romans 8:28 to 30. 9:23.

2 Corinthians 3:18. Characterized by glory, past, present, and future. Our glory in Christ is indeed past, present, and future.

We have already been given glory as Jesus states, quote, I have given them, Father, the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. John 17:22. We're being transformed from glory to glory as Paul expresses.

Here is 2 Corinthians 3:18. We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord, and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory. This is from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18. And we await glory as Paul describes. Quote, we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:2. Our future glorification follows Christ's glorious return. Titus 2: 13. 1 Peter 4:13.

And it's coupled to the renewal of the cosmos. Romans 8:19-23. 2 Peter 3:13.

Romans 8:19-23. 2 Peter 3:13. All of this as God's people, all of us as God's people, both the living and resurrected dead, will be glorified together.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52. Conformed to Christ's image.

The image of God in which we were created, Genesis 1:26-27, still exists in our being. Its function was tarnished in the fall, but is gradually restored in Christ. Colossians 3:9-10.

Ephesians 2:22-24. It will be perfected only when Christ, the true image, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:15, powerfully conforms us to his image in resurrection. Quote, Philippians 3:21.

He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body by the power that enables him to subject everything to himself. Philippians 3:21. Sinclair Ferguson in his book on the Holy Spirit points out, quote, the image and image bearers are one in spirit to the end, so that when Christ appears in glory, image bearers are one with him in that glory.

Colossians 3:4. We are raised in Christ, with Christ, by Christ, to be like Christ. In the meantime, we know Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27.

Participation in Christ's glory. Paul writes, quote, I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that's going to be revealed to us. Romans 8:18.

Astoundingly, glorification means resurrected saints seeing Christ's glory and being transformed by it. So as to partake of it, God will produce, quote, for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. 2 Corinthians 4:17.

In answer to Jesus' prayer, we will see his glory. John 17:24. And that vision will transform us.

Philippians 3:21. 1 John 3:2. So that we will actually partake of his glory. 1 Peter 5:2. God has prepared us beforehand for glory.

Romans 9:23. From the beginning and by his grace, he will bring many sons to glory. Hebrews 2:10.

In the end, alive with glorified bodies. Though at death, our spirits are made perfect. Hebrews 12:23.

Glorification involves our bodies being redeemed. Romans 8:23. There will be continuity between our present bodies and our resurrected bodies.

Resurrection bodies, verse 11. There will also be discontinuity, for our new bodies will be imperishable, glorious, powerful, and immortal. 1 Corinthians 15:42 through 54.

There will be both physical and spiritual. Verse 44, which means not immaterial, but ruled by the spirit. Dwelling in a renewed creation.

As believers, we are a microcosm of the final redemption of the cosmos. The macrocosm. Quote, the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage of corruption into the glorious freedom of God's children.

Romans 8:21. God will fulfill his purpose for his creation by delivering it from the curse. Revelation 22:3. And perfecting us.

1 Thessalonians 5:23. And perfecting it. 2 Peter 3:13.

Ferguson puts it well. Quote, the consummation of this glorification awaits the eschaton and the spirit's ministry in the resurrection. Here, too, the pattern of his working is as in Christ, so in believers, and by implication, so in the universe. Close quote. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, page 249.

In our next lecture, we will begin to think about salvation in terms of theological themes, showing how those themes crisscross through many of the doctrines that we have studied in these past lectures.

This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Salvation. This is session 20, Preservation and Perseverance, Part 4, Systematic Formulations, Apostasy, Eternal Life, Glory.