



“Can You Sin All You Want and Still Go to Heaven?”
(John 10:27-29)

Introduction: We come now to the final lecture in our series on Reformed Theology, which deals with the fifth point: the perseverance of the saints. This, I would mention by way of introduction, is the one which most Christians hope is true, for if it is not, then everything which has come before it in our series really makes no difference. If God chose you, sent Christ to die for you, drew you irresistibly by His Spirit to Christ to be justified by Him, and yet in the end you could fall away and end up in hell, then no one could ever be assured that they will ever reach heaven. As a matter of fact, there would be the very real possibility that the true Christian could actually be worse off in the long run than he was at the beginning. It could then happen to them as Peter says of the false prophets, “For it would be better for them *not to have known the way of righteousness*, than *having known it, to turn away* from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, ‘A dog returns to its own vomit,’ and, ‘A sow, after washing, *return to wallowing in the mire*’” (2 Pet. 2:21-22). The Bible says that the more a person knows concerning God’s Word and His will, the more responsible he will be in the day of judgment. Jesus said, “And that slave *who knew* his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, *shall receive many lashes*, but the one who did not know *it*, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more” (Luke 12:47-48). But the question I would raise this evening is, Are Jesus and Peter both teaching us in these passages that a genuine child of God can turn away from Him and end up being destroyed? Is it possible for a true child of God to be lost? Or are they speaking here of someone who comes short of salvation, who ends up receiving greater judgment? I believe the Bible plainly tells us that the second option is right. What I want you to see from tonight’s passage, and from the many others like it, is that

A true saint, a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, will never be lost.

I. First, let’s consider what Jesus says in our text, “And I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish” (v. 28) .

- A. We know from the Scripture that eternal life is not only a duration of life, but also a quality of life.
1. The Bible tells us that everyone who has ever been born already has eternal existence guaranteed to them.
 - a. No one will ever cease to exist. Everyone will continue to live, the Lord says, in one of two places: either heaven or hell.
 - b. It is not that they are indestructible in themselves, but God has decreed that this is the way things will be. Once He creates a soul, that soul will always be around. Those who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation will live forever with the Lord in heaven. And those who do not believe in Him will suffer forever in hell.
 2. And so when Jesus says here that He gives to His sheep eternal life, He is not saying that these will be around longer than the others, but in what kind of a state they will be.
 - a. He gives them a new quality of life, spiritual life, instead of spiritual death.
 - b. We come into this world spiritually dead because of the sin of Adam.
 - c. But Jesus, at the time of our conversion, makes us spiritually alive, by His Spirit. He makes us alive to God and the things of the Lord. He makes us love them. This is why we then come to Christ. We come to Him because that is what we want to do.
 - d. By giving us a love for Him, He prepares us in this world for that world we will live in for all eternity. He gives us a love for heaven. Once this happens, we begin to focus our lives on heaven, on the things which are above, and not on the things which are below.
 - e. But I would draw your attention again to how long Jesus says that this “life” will endure. He calls it eternal life. It is a quality of life which will never end.

B. Jesus strengthens this meaning by the words He uses next. He adds, “And they shall never perish.”

place.

by no means perish.” He strengthens it further by saying, *forever.*” This word is translated in the NASB as

- b. Jesus says that it’s impossible that those whom He gives this life to shall ever other words, to be cast into hell.
2. This one statement of Christ is so powerful and so clear that it is enough by itself to establish the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. But there are many more verses. Let me read you a few.

believes in Him *should not perish, but have eternal life*
water that I shall give him *shall never thirst* water that I shall give him shall become
in him a well of water springing up ” (4:14); “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who
believes My word, and believes Him who sent Me,
judgment, but has passed out of death into life
come to Me, and the one who comes to Me *I will certainly not cast out*
will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me *I lose nothing*
the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and
eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day” (6:37,
-40); “
Me; and I guarded them, and *not one of them perished*
Scripture might be fulfilled” (17:12); “Of those whom Thou hast given Me *I lost not one*
(18:9).

- b. Listen also to the words of the psalmist, “For the LORD loves justice, and does not forsake His godly ones; ; but the descendants of the wicked will be cut off” (37:28); “Those who trust in the LORD are as Mount Zion, w *but abides forever from this time forth and forever*” (125:1 2).

the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, ”
(Romans 5:10); “ confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you ” (Phil. 1:6).
 , “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus *obtain an inheritance imperishable and undefiled and will reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time* -5).

- e. And Jude writes, “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you
f. I would draw your attention to one last passage by the apostle Paul to bring this truth out even -30, “And we know that God cause work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His to become conformed to the image of -born among many brethren; and these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*”
(i) This passage has been called the golden chain of salvation, for it tells us what God has done and is doing to b glorification.
beforehand.
of Christ.

internal effectual call of the Spirit of God. It can't mean the general call to all men because of what follows.

- (v) Those whom He called, He also justified. Justification, as we saw this morning is salvation. It means to be declared by God to be innocent of all our sins and to have done everything right, not because we have in fact done so, but only because of Christ's perfect life and atoning work.
- (vi) And lastly, those whom He justified, He also glorified.
- (vii) Now notice what Paul is saying here and why it is that a true saint will never fall away. Notice that all who come in at the one end, also make it to the other. Those whom He foreknew, *these* He also predestined. Those whom He predestined, *these* He also called. Those whom He called, *these* He also justified. And those whom He justified, *these* He also glorified. There is no slippage here. All who begin, will also finish. As Jesus said, "Of those whom Thou hast given Me *I lost not one*" (John 18:9).

II. But why will they never perish? Jesus tells us in our text, "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

A. The Father has given them to Christ.

- 1. They are the reward which He has granted to Jesus for His work of redemption.
 - a. Are we to believe that Christ did His great work of redemption not knowing what His wages would be? Theoretically, if the Arminians were right, Christ might end up going through His great suffering for nothing, for not only would it be possible in their system that none would believe, but it would also be possible that all of them would fall away.
 - b. But He did know what He was going to receive. Isaiah wrote, "If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, *He will see His offspring*, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand" (53:10). And Jesus Himself said, "*All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me*" (John 6:37).
- 2. Those whom He has given to the Son are those whom He foreknew and predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the first-born among many brethren (Rom. 8:29).

B. And because the Father has given them to His Son, He will keep them from perishing so that He may deliver them to His Son.

- 1. Jesus says, "No one shall snatch them out of My hand" (v. 28).
- 2. The reason why no one shall snatch them out is because no one can take them away from the Father.
 - a. He will not allow them to be lost or to be taken away. Jesus says, "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (v. 29).
 - b. Certainly if anyone is able to guarantee a promise, God can. He has the infinite power which is necessary to do it.
 - c. Paul writes, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'For thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:33-39).
 - d. Jesus said, "Of those whom Thou hast given Me *I lost not one*" (John 18:9).
 - e. Certainly this follows from what we have already seen. If God chose before the foundation of the world to save a group of people, if He sent His Son to live a perfect life and to die the agonizing death of the cross in their place so that He actually saved them, if Christ came knowing that the Father had promised to give these people to Him as a reward for His

suffering, and if He sent His Holy Spirit to grant them the gift of faith and repentance so that they would embrace Christ with all their heart and trust in Him for everlasting life, will the Father then allow any of them to finally perish? If He did, then wouldn't all of His plans come to nothing? It could not have been His plan to save them, if in the end they are not saved. But if it is His plan to save them, then they will be saved.

3. But someone might object, It may be true that God will never allow them to perish, but isn't it true that they can turn their back on God and finally perish?
 - a. Some have put it like this, Sure, no one can snatch us out of His hand, but can't we jump out of His hand?
 - b. To answer this crassly, How can any finite being jump out of an infinite hand? If God wants something, He will have it.
 - c. But, as we have already seen in our series, God changes the hearts of His people so that they don't want to jump out of His hand. Why would anyone ever chose against what they want more than anything else in the world? God does not drag people kicking and screaming into His kingdom. He changes their hearts so that they come willingly. But once they come, they will never leave, because they will never want to leave.
 - d. But, they point out, there are passages of Scripture which appear to say that true Christians can be lost. Peter writes, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves" (2 Pet. 2:1). Paul writes, "And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is obligated to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:3-4). And of course, there are those most awesome words of the author to the Hebrews, "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame" (Heb. 6:4-6). Don't these passages seem to indicate that a Christian may be lost? Not really.
 - e. If they did, they would contradict everything we have already seen. If that were the case, then the liberals and neo-orthodox theologians would be right, there are different and competing theologies in the Scripture.
 - f. But we know this isn't true. There is only one Author of Scripture, and that is the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit does not contradict Himself. Therefore, there must be a way of understanding these passages so that we don't pit Scripture against Scripture.
 - g. Thankfully, there is.
 - (i) We are plainly told in the Bible that it is possible to be included in the covenant people of God and yet not be converted. In other words, it is possible to be in the visible church and not to be a true Christian. We are told by Jesus that there are tares among the wheat in Matthew 13. The tares are the sons of the evil one, and the wheat are the children of light. The only visible difference between a mature head of wheat and a tare is that the wheat bears grain but the tares do not. We are told by Christ that there are branches in Him that don't bear fruit in John 15. He says, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit" (v. 2). What is common to both is that they both don't bear fruit, and that they both end up being burned. Jesus said, "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (v. 6). They looked like they were in Christ. But Jesus tells us that they really weren't.
 - (ii) Paul also tells us in Romans 11 in the picture of the Olive Tree that there were Jews removed from God's covenant people, and Gentiles who were added. He tells us that it is possible for the Gentile branches to be broken off too, if they do not have faith.
 - (iii) Now all this is to say that a person may look as though he is outwardly a Christian, and yet not really be. This is why there are so many warnings in the Scriptures to the covenant people of God to examine themselves to see whether or not they are really in

the faith. It is possible to be in the Church and not really to be a Christian. We need to remember that virtually all of the men of war who came out of Egypt were not able to enter into the land of Promise and perished in the wilderness because they had no faith. And yet they were in God's covenant community. This is why Paul writes, in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

- (iv) The false prophets rose from among the covenant people, just as Peter says they will also rise from *among* them. Since they were in the covenant community, it appeared as though they were denying their Master, the One who bought His covenant people with His own blood. Those whom Paul speaks of appeared as though they received Christ, but then turned back to the ceremonial law of circumcision, as a means of salvation. These fell away from the salvation which is by grace alone. Therefore, they have been severed from Christ, that is, from His covenant. Those whom the author to the Hebrews refers to, who taste of the things of the Spirit of God and of the power of the age to come, experienced those things which were a part of the common work of the Spirit, but they did so in the context of the covenant community. They said they were trusting in Christ, but they ended up going back, as with those Paul was speaking to in Galatians, to the ceremonial law. They fell away from Christ. But the author to the Hebrews makes it clear that they were not falling away from true salvation by the words he then writes. He says, "But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way" (Heb. 6:9).
- (v) The bottom line is that a person can be in the church, and yet still fall away. But this doesn't mean that they lost their salvation. It only means they never really had it to start with. The apostle John writes, "They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us" (1 John 2:19).
- (vi) These passages do not tell us that a true Christian can fall away. They only serve as a warning to us that we should examine our hearts to make sure that we are truly converted, lest we also fall away in the end.

- C. But finally, I would like to end by answering the question which I raised by the title of this sermon. Does this mean that if you are a true Christian that you can sin all you want and still go to heaven?
1. The answer is no. The Bible does not teach the perseverance of the sinner, but the perseverance of the saint.
 2. John makes it painfully clear in his first letter that the one who practices sin is not going to heaven.
 - a. He writes, "*No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother*" (1 John 3:6-10).
 - b. Those who teach that once you make a decision for Christ, you are going to heaven no matter what else you do are seriously wrong, so wrong that they actually destroy the Gospel. Jesus came to set us free from sin, not to leave us in bondage to sin. This kind of teaching is bound to lead many straight to hell. Undoubtedly, it already has.
 - c. The author to the Hebrews writes, "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:26-31).

- d. If you practice sin, you will perish with the devil. But if you practice righteousness, then you will truly dwell with Christ forever in heaven.
- e. All this should serve to teach us that we must never base our salvation on whether or not we are in the visible church, but on whether or not we are believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and bringing forth the fruits of His grace.
- f. Jesus says in our passage, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (v. 27). They hear the voice of their Master, the Lord Jesus in the Word. Jesus knows them, that is, He has an intimate love relationship with them. And, most importantly for this last point, they follow Him, that is, they go where He leads them, and they do what He commands them.
- g. The reason why they do is the same reason they come to Him in the first place: God has changed their hearts and given them a desire to walk with Him in holiness. And the reason why they will persevere in that life of holiness is that God will never allow them to perish. They are His forever. They will persevere, because God will be careful to preserve them.
- h. If you are a child of God here this evening, if you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, if you love holiness and are practicing holiness in every area that you know how, then that work of salvation which God has begun in you, He will perfect it until the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rejoice and be glad. The Lord will never allow you to perish.
- i. But if you are not, then I would counsel you to put your trust in Him now. Christ is the door through which one may enter and find rest. Outside of Him you will surely perish. But in Him is a sure refuge. Believe on Him, and you will never perish. Amen.