

Record of Sermons delivered during the month of
February 2021

(added progressively for each Sunday)

(see following pages)

Perseverance & Reward

per S Olyott

2 Thessalonians 1:5

⁵ This is evidence of the righteous judgement of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—¹

Introduction to the second letter. Some might say, “If only I could have heard Paul.” Well this morning you can sit and hear Paul and also Silvanus, that early Jewish Christian who accompanied Paul on his journeys and was in prison with him in Philippi. He’s here too. What about Timothy, that faithful lieutenant of Paul, who was saved there with his godly grandmother and mother, becoming Paul’s delegate and trusted colleague as Paul’s life was ending. In many ways Paul’s successor. They are all here with us! We are so privileged to have the Holy Scriptures. The record of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy writing to us. It is our duty and pleasure to give our attention to these Great men of God and particularly to Paul, an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You’ll notice in the first verse, that Paul is writing almost identically to the manner of the first letter. “To the church of the Thessalonians”, he says. It’s still the year 52, that sea port in Greece is still there and in that great cosmopolitan city there is an assembly of men and women. Men and women who have come together, because they have been ‘called out’. When Paul announced the Gospel with his two colleagues, during those three weeks in early 52, a great number of Conversions took place: some Jews and an enormous number of Greeks (Gentiles) and not a few of the leading women of the city.

There is the gathering of that local church, and here are the three men of God who now also write to us because that church is no longer there, but the letter has been preserved. Therefore it is a letter from these great men of God to every local church and to every Christian. It has been preserved, *in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*:

We saw last week that the world is divided, and we will see that again in a minute. Some people are ‘in’ Christ and some are without Him. Some are ‘in’ God the Father and some are out of Him. What the Gospel does is that it brings us from the lost situation to be ‘in’ God the Father. Out of a perishing situation to be ‘in’ the Saviour – in the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s what makes a Christian a Christian. From which we have a Church. This is to whom the letter comes.

Once more we notice, as we did with the first letter, verse 2, that we don’t have to be afraid of this letter. Even though it will have to say some very, very hard things. Later

¹ From the Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible notes, page 1945: **worthy of the kingdom.** Paul spoke elsewhere of living lives worthy of God; of God’s call; of Christ; and of the Gospel. He did not mean by this that people are able to make themselves worthy of receiving these blessings. Instead, he spoke of lifestyles appropriate for recipients of God’s blessings. By God’s grace we are enabled to live in ways that are fitting for the people of God. In this case, Paul had in mind the ability to endure persecution.

we will see how very frank and direct Paul talks. And recognise how very unpopular his teaching is. But we shouldn't be afraid of the letter: ² *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Grace is the greeting Greeks give and shalom or peace is the greeting Jews give. "But these greetings," says Paul, "I don't give them." Nor does Silas or Timothy! But by means of this letter, God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are coming to greet you. So we don't have to doubt or be afraid of what we are to study together. God will do us good, as usual, as we study the Scriptures.

What is this first chapter about?

In verses 3-5 Paul is going to tell them that despite the persecutions that they are experiencing, yet they are making progress in the Christian life. That encourages us. We'll look at those in a moment. We will ask ourselves a question, "Are we making progress?" Real progress in the Christian life. "Are we an encouragement to anybody – as they were to Paul?"

In verses 6-10 he's going to tell them that it is worth going on. It's worth persevering! Worth going forward. On a Sunday morning there is at least somewhere a tired Christian. Someone who is dispirited. Looking at their life and finding that it falls short of what the new spirit in them wants them to be. Their witness seems anaemic and flat and their local church life, seems to them, far from the ideal. Sometimes they say to themselves, and the devil reinforces it, "Is it really worth going on?" In verses 6-10, Paul is going to tell us that it is!

Verses 11 to the end: he is going to say that he is going to pray for you. Once more we come face to face with one of the two great themes of these letters: One great theme is the Second Coming and the other great theme is prayer. We will ask ourselves a further question: "Do we pray for each other? Do we really!"

So to begin:

- Verses 3,4 & 5. "You're making progress," he says. It's a very interesting section. It tells us great deal about Christian growth. It tells us, for example that Christian growth is visible. ³ *We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because ...* Their Christian growth was visible! "We thank God for it!" Say Paul, Silas and Timothy. He says the same thing in verse 4: ⁴ *... we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God ...* Something was happening in Thessalonica which could be seen. Which filled three men's hearts with thanksgiving and wherever they went, they were able to talk about it.

Often we can be given the impression that Christian growth is secret. It is true that growth in the Christian life takes place in the inmost place of the heart and the mind. But Christian growth is always visible! It is something that can be seen. There are definite evidences of it. Other people looking on can see whether you're growing or whether you're not.

It starts in the heart but it doesn't stay in the heart. It starts in secret, but it is not long before it is plainly obvious that certain people are growing and others are not. That's why Paul was able to be encouraged. He could 'see' that they were growing.

He tells us also that Christian growth is definable. What actually is: Christian growth? We mention it a lot. What is growing in the Christian life? What does it mean to become stronger, spiritually? Verse 3 gives the answer: ³ *We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.*

What is Faith? Faith is knowing. So if your knowledge of God's word and ways is growing and becoming greater: that's great!

Faith is believing. The more you know, the more you can believe.

And faith is trusting. The more you know; the more you can believe it to be true; the more you can put your whole weight and trust in it. The whole weight of your individual salvation; your family life; your Church life; your professional life; your life as a citizen and a neighbour. Every other dimension of your whole existence. You can put your whole weight upon it.

There is no such thing as Christian growth, without knowledge. Failure to come regularly to hear Biblical preaching, is a form of spiritual anorexia. Not to be with others to study the Word of God is a form of deliberate starvation. What made those in earlier generations so great was their knowledge of God. What makes any Christian great and strong is their knowledge of the Word of God. You can't believe more if you don't know more. You can't put all your weight on what you believe, if you don't know more. We are in the position to know more! We all have the Bible in our own tongue; we can read; well-chosen Christian books; opportunities for Bible Study groups. There is no excuse for any Christian not to be the strongest Christian on the planet.

Christian growth is definable: verse 3. ³ ... and *the love of every one of you for one another* Love in the Bible, as we know, is not basically an emotion. It has an emotional side to it. But love in the Bible is basically a discipline. There are the others and here am I. I will do everything that I can do to help them. To bless them. To do them good. I will do everything that I can do to forward their welfare: spiritually; mentally; physically. Even if I have to sacrifice myself as Christ sacrificed Himself. I will do what I can to be a blessing to them.

There's a wonderful balance in Christian growth. If we were just filling their mind up with knowledge and more knowledge. Even if they were believing it and putting all their weight on it, but they weren't using all these wonderful graces for the benefit and the welfare of others. The whole thing would be dreadfully unbalanced.

Of course you can fall into an unbalance the other way. Many folk have. They

attempt to do all the good they can, in all the ways they can, to all the people they can, as long as ever they can. (As Wesley put it.) But their zeal is not motivated by knowledge, so they may move out of 'God's way' because they don't actually know what 'God's way' is! Christian growth is definable. Paul having defined it there.

The third thing he tells us about Christian growth is that is independent of circumstances. Verse 4: *⁴ Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.* Persecution, afflictions – things to endure. How many Christians there are who say, "Oh! If only, my circumstances were different I would be a better Christian. If only, I lived in a different family; if only, I went to a different Church or; if only, I was in a different part of the country. If only ... if only. Then: I would be a better Christian.

But Paul says to the Thessalonians, "You've got nothing going for you, humanly speaking. You wake up in the morning and it's persecution and trouble: things to endure. But you are going forward, and I'm able to boast with Silas and Timothy, of the progress that you are making."

In a very real sense you are in the Christian life what you decide to be. God's plants don't grow in greenhouses. God's plants grow out in the wind; the pelting rain and; the burning heat. God's plants don't grow where it is easy.² They grow best where it is difficult. They are watered with tears.

It is foolishness to pretend that you would be the better Christian that your new – God changed – will desires, if you were only somewhere else.

And, Christian growth is humanly inexplicable! We come to a difficult verse in verse 5: *⁵ This is evidence of the righteous judgement of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—* In this there is a mystery. There are some people who are obviously growing in faith in a world that doesn't believe. There are some people who are obviously growing in love in a world that is increasingly selfish. They are growing in faith and love together. Circumstances are against them, but they go forward none the less. There is no human explanation for that. It's humanly inexplicable!

The explanation which Paul gives is this: That we live in a divided world. There are some people in the world who justly live under the judgement of God. But there are other people who are **declared** (correct Greek meaning) worthy of the kingdom of God for which they suffer. The very fact that we are going forward at all. The very fact that we continue to believe. Is an evidence in this divided world that in the mercy of God we are not amongst those who are under the judgement of God, but are amongst those who are declared worthy of the kingdom of God for which we also suffer. (This will lead naturally to our second

2 In the foundation document of a dangerous cult that began in the late 19th Century and has spread its heresy worldwide, we nevertheless find some worthy insights. One is that the first 4 Centuries of the Christian Church, where persecution was extreme, the faith retained it's power and purity. Following that, with social and political acceptance, the church was invaded and corrupted by the ways of the world. Culminating in the Synagogue of Satan – the Roman Church. A temporary revival occurred at the time of the Reformation; but in the last Century and a half the Western Church has lost it's truth and vigour again.

group of verses, 6-12: It is worth going on! Which we will continue with next week.)

So far then in verses 3-5, Paul is saying, that we have made some progress, and we learn some things about Christian growth.

[2097]

Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today. Amen

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12
Perseverance & Reward – Part 2

per S Olyott

2 Thessalonians 1:12

¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week we began this first Chapter of the second letter. In verses 3-5 Paul was telling members of the Thessalonian local Church that despite the persecutions that they were experiencing, yet they were making progress in the Christian life. This was an encouragement for them, as it also was to Paul himself. We were asked to ponder: “Were we also making progress and being thus an encouragement to others around us?”

Now in verses 6-12 Paul says, “That it is worth persevering. It’s worth going on.”

- Look now at verse 6-10 in this very instructive Chapter. (verse 6) God is a just God and therefore He undertakes to punish the wicked. And being a just God (verse 7) He undertakes to give rest to all persecuted Christians. It doesn’t look like that right now! The world is getting more and more wicked and God would not be just if He didn’t judge it. Christians are being more and more persecuted – though in some cases, more and more subtly, nonetheless. God would not be just if He didn’t give them and us rest after all those afflictions.

“When will it take place, Paul? When will accounts be settled. When will wrong be put right. Publicly. Visibly. Eternally.” (verse 7) When the Lord Jesus Christ comes back. “How will He come?” ⁷ ... *when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven ...*

You’ve never seen Him! Nobody’s seen Him! No Christian in the world today has seen Jesus Christ. But one day He will be revealed. Then He’ll be revealed from heaven. Not a babe coming in a manger. Next time He comes He comes from heaven. This is the great *parousia*³ – the great event! The momentous event which will end space and time.

“Tell me more, Paul.” He will be revealed ⁷ ... *with his mighty angels ...* This will be the day when heaven’s curtains are drawn back and we shall see what is invisible to us at the moment. We shall see all the angels in their brightness and their strength.

Then He comes, ⁸ *in flaming fire, ...* The Lord Jesus Christ. This great day is coming! In each Chapter Paul speaks about it and in each Chapter, he tells us more detail. Now He’s becoming very specific indeed. There is to be a great event which the world has put aside. The world wouldn’t even want to think about it, if it knew. But this is the great historic certainty. Already written in

³ **Parousia** (/pəˈruːziə/; Greek: **παρουσία**) is an ancient Greek word meaning presence, arrival, or official visit.

God's history book! Just as Bethlehem and the Mount of Olives is already in that history book. So the Second Coming is already written in God's book.

“What will the Lord Jesus Christ do on that day to the wicked?” (verse 8) ⁸... *inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.* They shall be punished!

The world has a very poor view of Jesus Christ: a pale, anaemic, spineless Galilean. But when the bible speaks about Christ, it speaks about Him as this great King coming with the mighty angels in flaming fire. Now we see all the Nations before Him. All the dead are raised and those still living are also there. All men and angels before Jesus Christ, yet He's despised by the World. But the 'last Word' is His Word! The final division is made by His hand alone.

Here are the wicked. Who are the wicked? (Here we have two things in apposition⁴) Those who do not know God and those who do not obey the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ being the same people. Nobody knows God, except those who obey the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nobody! There is no religion which leads to God. Not even the Christian Religion – in and of itself. It's obedience to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the way to God. We are saved by a Person. And the news about this Person is Good News: that is, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's only in submission to this Gospel that any man or woman is saved. Everyone else is someone who does not know God.

Everybody else! The Gospel IS exclusive. It is terrible wickedness to give the impression that all who say they are Christians, are Christians. It is terrible wickedness to give the impression that all religions are more or less valid. That you can assemble in some great prayer meeting of all of them at Assisi⁵ and pretend that everyone of them has some light and with them all together we have the truth.

Jesus Christ spoke in the world and said, “I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but by me.”

The Apostle Paul declares that there is One God and One Mediator between God and man: the man Christ Jesus.

The Apostle Peter declared: neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other Name under heaven, given amongst men, whereby we must be saved.

Paul states: that if you don't know Christ you don't know God. If you haven't embraced the Gospel you haven't embraced God Himself.

Therefore you're still amongst the wicked. Of course you're still amongst the wicked! Whose sins did Jesus bear? The sins of believers. He bore the sin of every man or woman who would ever believe on Him. Therefore those who

4 Apposition: a relationship between two or more words or phrases in which the two units are grammatically parallel and have the same referent (e.g. *my friend Sue ; the first US president, George Washington*).

5 Inter-religious Assembly at Assisi (1986) – John Paul II.

haven't believed on Him, their sins haven't been put to the charge of the account of the Son of God. Therefore all their sins are still on their own account.

How wicked is sin? Any sin is as to, an infinite God, an infinite and everlasting Person. Therefore every sin is infinite, everlasting and unchangeable in its consequence. It's a just punishment. So Paul says in verse 9: ⁹ *They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, ...*

Think carefully about what Paul is saying. Destruction is destruction, isn't it? If I have something and I destroy it then it is destroyed! Is that everlasting destruction? It's destroyed once and for all. It's over. It's finished. But Paul wants to explain to us that the ruin of unconverted people will be total. Therefore he adds this adjective 'everlasting' ... destruction. Otherwise we might take the view that God takes the wicked and He annihilates them! But Paul forbids us to think that. Their destruction is everlasting destruction. Their ruin is everlasting ruin. God is eternally active towards the unconverted. He's eternally active in anger and punishment. They are totally ruined and undone. But they are not obliterated, or wiped away.

It then is equally, great wickedness, to tell the world, that unconverted people will just be wiped out. After all that's what they want and expect. Isn't it?

But God won't give this to them. Because that is to make mockery of the Cross of Christ and what He did. And to make mockery of the immensity and awfulness of human sin.

The punishment will be real. It will be just. (verse 6) It will be total (verse 9) *the punishment of eternal destruction, ...* It will be awful ... *away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ...*

We recognise that God is present in His Creation. Where He dispenses 'common grace'. An unconverted mother embraces her children, because there is a certain grace that God gives to all men and women – it doesn't save them – but it restrains evil in the world. That's the presence of God in His Creation.

Not everybody is a liar or a thief. You can take a journey in a foreign country and you won't be murdered, as a matter of course, when you are not under the protection of your own government. People generally behave in a civilised manner because God is restraining their sin and the wickedness of their heart. But when the presence of the Lord is withdrawn, then what will it be? Hell is not only the place where the wicked are actively punished by God, but is the place of hate and all perversions. There is nothing good at all!

That's why hell is awful. ⁹ ... *the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,* There is not a light to enlighten them. Not a comfort to console them. When He comes!

And those three words, written by Paul, show to us the certainty of all this. It's not a matter of, 'if He comes', it's 'when He comes'! The whole world is running, as fast as it can, towards the eternal abyss. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes, the world will be seen for what it is.

There are those who are in Christ and in the Father and there are those who are not. They are outside now and it will be rendered public and eternal, what they are actually now. And the only thing people have to do to be lost, is to remain as they are. It will then be seen like that when He comes. Says the Apostle Paul.

Here is the great division. The awfulness of it and the glory of it. And this is also underlined by the words which follow. God is not neutral towards anybody. On that day when they go to their perdition and their great loss, that is the same day (verse 10) ¹⁰ *when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.*

“What do you mean, Paul?” ... *glorified in his saints*, ... When that great assembly of we who have been saved by Jesus Christ alone takes place, there won't be any imperfection left. There will be no sin, nor curse, nor any of the fruits of sin. No effect of sin will ever be felt again. It's all been undone by Christ's Cross. Even our bodies will have been redeemed and made like Christ's glorious body. There won't be any taste of bitterness.

That means that when you look at a fellow Christian, you will see the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in him. When you look at the brother or sister in Christ who is sitting near you at church this morning you will see them without any trace of imperfection or impurity. They will be perfectly holy and entirely happy. An amazing new creature, that will cause you to admire the Lord Jesus Christ.

He will be admired by those who believe. And admired among those who believe. Because when we see each other glorified (and that day is closer every day) we shall recognise that only God did this and He did it through the blood of the Cross. We won't be able to hold back our praise. We'll admire this great work of redemption. That is the great division. That's why it's worth going on.

“You have believed.” says Paul, verse 10, “We came to Thessalanica, with human lips – with all our frailty – surrounded by noise and humdrum and persecution. We announced the Gospel. We didn't philosophise. We preached Christ: told you that He lived and died and rose again. We proclaimed Him as King. And you believed! Because you believed that is the future that is reserved for you. So it's worth going on.

Why would you ever want to give it all up, and go back to what you were? When you now know, from the Word of God, what happens to unbelief. Why turn your back on the Christian faith, or even think of it? When you know in your conscience and from God's Word that this great day is coming. This great public,

eternal, division of humanity. It's worth going on. That is his whole point this morning.

- Now the third and final point from this passage: he's told them that they are making progress. Are you? Am I? He's told them that it is worth going forward. Now he assures them as they go forward that he prays for them: verses 11 & 12. ¹¹ *To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfil every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power,* ¹² *so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.* "We always pray for you!" Can you say that?

"When do you pray, Paul?" (verse 3) ³ *We ought **always** to give thanks to God for you, ...* (verse 11) *To this end we **always** pray for you, ...*

"To whom do you pray, Paul?" (verse 11) ... *our God* ... Not one God for the Apostles and another for the rest of the Christians. (verse 12) ... *the Lord Jesus Christ.*

"*What do you pray for, Paul?* (verse 11) *that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfil every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ...* "God calls you. It was part of an eternal plan. And our prayer is that this good plan, will be fulfilled in your life. The God that called you to be saved will keep you on the road, so you won't stray off it. You who have come to believe. This faith will keep with you. God will keep working in your life so that you continue in belief. That His great work of power will continue. We are praying that you will persevere and go on. You've got to persevere to be saved. It's worth persevering. So we are praying that you will."

Do we pray like that for each other. Every Christian here is beset by temptation. There are thousands of traps for you every day, not counting tomorrow. The devil has all sorts of hidden tricks. We can run from one yet fall for another. We certainly can't keep going on our own. We've got to pray for each other – this is one of God's ways of channelling His power. Paul did! He prayed for their continuing perseverance.

"Why do you pray, Paul?" (verse 12) ¹² *so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Because frankly, Jesus Christ will either be glorified in you or blasphemed through you. You profess the Christian faith and then walk out on it! The world will say, "Ugh, told you so. It never works." Once more His Name is in the mud.

While the person that keeps in the faith, despite persecution. Growing in knowledge. Growing in love. Growing like Christ. Filled with second coming expectation. A heavenly creature, living on earth. Transforming from glory to glory by the Spirit. The world has to stand back, saying, "We don't understand that!" While some see, and the Name of the Lord is lifted up. So that on the Last Day it is seen that the Lord Jesus Christ has seen them safely through, and He re-

ceives all the glory. That's why we want each other to go on. Not only for our own good, but for Christ's glory.

“And what is your confidence, as you pray, Paul?” ¹² ... *according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.* God wants to do sinners good. God is good to sinners. “As Silas and Timothy, pray with me for you. As we pray that you might be preserved and not fall away, we pray that Christ will be glorified in you and you in Him. We don't pray in trembling or doubt or fear. We believe that God wants to do good to sinners. In fact, that God is good to sinners. That grace comes from God through the Lord Jesus Christ. So we are confident as we pray.”

So the Chapter ends. But leaves us with some personal questions: Am I making progress? Are you? Am I living in the expectation of the Last Day? Are you? Are you praying for one another? Having heard the Word of God, what are you going to do with it: this Word?

[2743]

Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today. Amen

Romans 8:28-39

The Perseverance of the Saints (a)

per S Olyott

John 10:29,30

“...²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”

For some who haven't been a Christian for very long, there may be times when you wonder if you are able to keep going. This message is for you!

Others may be going through a difficult time. Problems seem just too big. You wonder: “How can I cope? Can I keep going?” This message is also for you.

Others are active in ‘soul winning’. You've seen people ‘come to Christ’. You know the situation in which they live and you ask, “Can they keep going?” This message is for you, as well.

The final perseverance of the saints: part 5 of the series the Five Points of the Compass. Actually this is part 5(a), because there are two distinct parts to it.

The Bible is **from** God. The Bible is **about** God. But it is also about you and me and men and women everywhere. Sin has come into our nature: we can't save ourselves. But we need to be saved. Just by staying as we are we're going to go to hell forever. There's nothing about me or you that pleases God. Nothing about our thoughts, words or actions which are acceptable to Him. Some may be better than others, but compared with the holiness of God we are all polluted. God looks down on impurity and rejects it because He is absolute purity. God is totally light and if there is any darkness at all, He must cast it away. We need to be saved and we can't save ourselves, because even our will is polluted with sin. That's the situation we're in! “T” in our series of the Five Points stood for Total Depravity – sin has entered in.

God, in His kindness, has chosen certain men and women to be saved. Doing this before the world was made. Before they had done any good or evil. That's called Unconditional Election: “U” is the second Point of the Compass.

The Lord Jesus Christ came for those people. The life that they could never live, He lived it for them and now that life is put to **their** account. The just death they deserved to die, He died it for them and so their sins are put to **His** account. The Lord Jesus Christ came for His sheep. That's whom He came for and that's whom He saved on the cross. “L”, stands for this Limited Atonement. The third Point.

The ones that God has chosen are the ones that Christ died for. During their lifetime they hear the Gospel. Most don't respond to it the first time they hear it. But sometime in their lifetime: as children; as teenagers; as they are older; and some, by the way, at the very last moment. Sometime in their lifetime these people, whom God has loved in

a special way, they respond to the Gospel because they are 'called', effectively, powerfully, effectually by God. And the 'call' of Christ through the Gospel, actually gives them a new nature. New affections. New desires. In fact, a new will. So they come to Christ willingly. Embracing Him, as He is freely offered to them in the Gospel and enter personally into the experience of being saved. "I", stands for irresistible grace: The fourth Point.

Now the fifth Point. "P", The final, Perseverance of the saints. T U L I P.

What we are going to learn or relearn this morning is this: Every person whom God has chosen; every person for whom Christ has died; every person who is changed by the Holy Spirit as they are called by the Gospel: Will persevere in the faith and be brought safely to heaven. Every single one on whom God has set His special love is going to end up in heaven.

However, there are two sides to this great truth: if you are elect, purchased and called, you may never fear being lost. That's one side.

But the only grounds that you have for believing that you are elect, purchased and called are that you persevere in the faith. You stick at being a Christian, to the very end. That's the second side of this truth. Which we will call, part (b) of this extended message.

Part (a) then is all comfort, but part (b) will have a sting in it! It's the same love which sends the 'sting' as sends the 'comfort'.

Firstly then, let's be comforted. Later we will be reminded that we can't just live as the rest of the world chooses to live, we've got to live the 'new life' we have been given, as evidence to ourselves that we really are the new creation we believe ourselves to be.

PART A: No one whom God has loved eternally. No one for whom Christ died. No one who has been called by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. Need ever fear of being lost! We'll rehearse this in three parts. First the logical explanation; then the Biblical proofs; and finally the implications. We will also need next week to complete these three parts.

- Every thing that we have rehearsed under the title of the Five Points of the Compass, so far today and in the previous 'interludes', make this final truth – final, Perseverance of the saints – clear.

God has purposed to save a people. Will they get to heaven or not? If they don't: God's purpose has been frustrated!

Christ has died to save a people. Will they be saved finally or not? Or will God, as it were, be outwitted?

The Holy Spirit has called a people into the experience of salvation. Will they get to heaven or not? Or will His calling be just a waste of time?

If God's purpose doesn't come to pass. If God can be outwitted. If God's plan isn't fulfilled. Then God isn't God!

There are things God can't do, because He is God:

- God can't change. Malachi 3:6. ⁶ *"For I the LORD do not change; ... "*
But if God has planned to save certain people, and they don't all get to heaven, something has changed in the plan and mind, and therefore in God Himself.
¹⁷ *... there is no variation or shadow due to change*, says James 1:17
It's simply because God can't change that all the chosen people will get to heaven!
- God can't deny Himself. We need to say, "No!" to ourselves because we are sinful. God never needs to say, "No", to Himself, because all His desires are pure.
God has chosen to Himself a people. He never needs to say, "No", to Himself, because everything He does is Holy. But if His people don't arrive in heaven, He does in effect deny Himself! Yet the Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:13. ¹³ *if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.* Also it says in Ecclesiastes 3:14. ¹⁴ *I perceived that whatever God does endures for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, ...* God's purpose is always unchangeable – unalterable. If anything is added to it: it would be an improvement – showing that it wasn't perfect in the first place. If anything was taken away from it: it would be less than it was before, so would now be imperfect.

What ever God has decided to do He does. If He doesn't do what He has decided to do, He ceases to be God! That's why the Scriptures say in Isaiah 46:9b,10.

⁹ *... for I am God, and there is no other;*

I am God, and there is none like me,

¹⁰ *declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose',*

Further at Ephesians 1:11. ¹¹ *... according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,*

It is therefore a certainty, that every true Christian will arrive in heaven.

You're a true Christian when the Holy Spirit calls you through the Gospel. The Holy Spirit called you through the Gospel, because Christ died for you. Christ died for you because God chose you. It is a certainty therefore you will arrive in heaven.

There are however two sorts of Christians who doubt that they will get to heaven. There are those who don't believe that God is actually sovereign: that He **is** King and does exactly what He pleases. They of course will doubt, that all God's people are going to get to heaven.

Then there are those who don't believe that God chose anybody. That He doesn't have an eternal plan to save a definite, particular people. Obvi-

ously they are going to doubt that Christians will get to heaven. Because at the end of the day they believe that we get there under our own steam. [Lots of luck for any 'fallen' person!]

But if you believe what the Bible teaches about God. And you believe what the Bible teaches about election, then you cannot fail to believe that every true Christian will arrive safely in heaven.

It's a wonderful truth we are talking about, right here this morning. It's not an accident that there are hymns about heaven in our Hymn Book. It's not an accident that at a Christian funeral, besides the tears, there's a certainty and a measure of joy. It's not an accident that as Christians get older that though they look at the grave with apprehension, there's something inside them that is making them look forward. Not an accident. Because we know who we believe and we know where we are going. (See Hymn 579) We know we will get there and we know that we won't fall at the final hurdle.

- All that we have rehearsed so far makes that clear. Now let's look at some relevant Bible verses. It's important that we do this because some people will always say, "Fine I believe all that you say so far, but you're still only arguing logically. It's true that you've mentioned a few Scripture verses. But I actually want to see it for myself." So we do that now – and next week. We will have time only for a selection of Bible verses since there are dozens and dozens that are available.

We start with the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in John Chapter 5: 24. ²⁴ *Truly, truly, (that is, emphatically) I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me **has** eternal life. (He doesn't say 'shall have' – eternal life) **He does not come into judgement, but has passed from death to life.***

Jesus uses the present tense 'has', the future tense 'does not come' – into judgement' and uses the past tense 'has passed' – from death to life. So you are alive, you're never going to be condemned. The life that you have received is everlasting. If – you are a believer: Jesus says so!

Those promises are wonderfully comforting. When Christians come near the end of their life – while some die suddenly others are ill for a long time. They have time to reflect. What is it that comforts when they have time to reflect? It's these promises.

The Christian philosopher, Dr Francis Schaeffer, when he was dying of cancer at age, 72 – was it his philosophy, at which he was particularly skilled, that brought him comfort as he approached the grave? No. As people went to visit him, they found him always with his Bible open: reading the promises of Scripture. The promises of Scripture.

B B Warfield, possibly the greatest theologian of the earlier part of the 20th Century, when he was dying. The same again. The promises of Scripture.

The promises of the Word of God.

Do they comfort your heart right now? It's written in the Scripture. Jesus said it.

Now to chapter 6:37- 40 of John's Gospel. " ... ³⁷ *All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.* ³⁸ *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.* ³⁹ *And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.* ⁴⁰ *For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*"

"I've come to do the Father's will. The Father has given me people. These are the people who see and believe. But I won't lose any of them! Of everything that God has given me, I will lose nothing. Everyone of them, I personally will raise them from the dead on the great Last Day!" Jesus said so. Surely we can take Him at His Word. He is God the Son. We can take Him at His Word that he will raise them from the dead. Because He is risen from the dead, never to die again.

Now, John Chapter 10. Here Jesus talks (at the beginning of verse 27) about His sheep: the sheep are His people, the ones who come to believe in Him. "... ²⁷ *My sheep hear my voice, (have you heard that voice? Have you heard the voice of Jesus – we will sing a hymn about this) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (do you follow Him?)* ²⁸ *I give them eternal life, and they will **never perish**, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.* ²⁹ *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.* ³⁰ *I and the Father are one.*"

"If you're in my hands, you're in the Father's hands. If you're in the Father's hands you're in my hands. No one will snatch them out of my hands. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hands, because He's greater than all! I and the Father am One."

If language has any meaning, could there be any stronger or better way that this could be put? **The believer in Christ is perfectly safe!**

With that fully-comforting, summary so far, we close, for now. There are further proofs further on in the New testament which will pick up next week.

[2432]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.
Amen**

Romans 8:28-39

The Perseverance of the Saints (a) – Part 2

per S Olyott

Romans 8:28

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^[1] for those who are called according to his purpose.

The believer in Christ is perfectly safe, was the 'take home' meaning of the Bible reference we ended with last week. (John 10:27-30)

We, the sheep – the chosen elect – are in Christ's hands. We are in God's hands. ³⁰ *I and the Father are one*, ... says the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we continue to recognise the wealth of comfort in the scriptures: which teach, that God is in charge of the Perseverance of the saints.

Romans Chapter 5: The Apostle Paul wrote Romans. The Lord Himself having wonderfully converted him and trained him. He was a blasphemer, persecutor and enemy of the Christian faith. He was saved by the risen Christ, made an Apostle and a teacher of men and women like you and me. Romans is his explanation of the Gospel – the 'good news'. We read from verse 10: ¹⁰ *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.* ¹¹ *More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

You see we were enemies from God, weren't we? We were brought back to God! (See that parallel with Paul himself.) By whom? God Himself – through the great work of Christ. The Holy Spirit applies this experience to our inner being and stays within us as an earnest, a deposit – that is as a guarantee of ultimate glory: 'Growth in favour with God'; transformation of corruptible bodies to incorruptible – mortal to immortal; ex-oration at the judgement (the inevitable result of justification at conversion); and eternity with Christ in heaven.

Now continuing with Paul's logic: If when we were enemies with God. When we were deliberate and habitual sinners and proud of it, God Chose to save us to eternal life, how much more now that we are reconciled with Him will he maintain our salvation to the very end of this life and then eternity.

Rejoice in that!

Now to chapter 8, which has been our reading for these two weeks. It's often read at funerals, and why not if the funeral is a Christian funeral. Romans 8:28-30 ²⁸ *And we know* (these are great words – so many world religions say, "we think: we feel", but Gospel believers say, "We know!") *We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* (So you can know if you're called, can't you? The verse says so: if you love God, this can only be

so, because He has called you. Some are called dramatically, others quietly. You can know if you are called if you love the God of Scripture. Do you love Him right now this morning? Then all things work together for good. Even your present problems!)²⁹ *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*³⁰ *And those whom he predestined he also called,* (So you were called because you were predestined) *and those whom he called he also justified,* (that is you're made right with God – there is no enmity between you and God) *and those whom he justified he also glorified.* (notice this is in the past tense! But we are not in heaven yet – body and spirit – but it's put in the past tense to make it clear that it's so certain, that it's as certain as the known events, that have already taken place.)

There is no danger, that if you are a true Christian, that you will be lost. There is no cause for any fear. Your heart need never beat a beat faster. You cannot be lost as long as God is the saving God of the Bible.

Let's move on. Chapter 11:29 is a great verse: ²⁹ *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.* God doesn't go back on the things He gives! Did you once have a childhood friend who gave one day his special possession and snatched it back the next, when you fell out with him? God's not like that! Have you ever been called to a particular place and when you got there, told, "Oh well, it doesn't matter." God isn't like that! If He gives you the gift of eternal life, it's given. If He's called you to salvation, you're called. He never goes back on it. ²⁹ *the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

We could look at so many verses, but let's chose Ephesians 1:13: *to the praise of his glory.*

Here Paul uses some very vivid language. What a variety of ways used in the New Testament: sometimes in promise, sometimes by statement, and sometimes in picture. ¹³ *In him you also,* (talking about Christ. Have you trusted in Christ?) ³ *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,* (Paul was brought up in Tarsus, a sea port. Here is a boat going across the sea to all sorts of destinations: maybe Antioch, then Caesarea, or Joppa, then down to the North African coast. The loaded goods are individually labelled for their destination. Not only different destinations, but they are consigned from different agents or merchants. Therefore they are 'sealed' – a stamp is put on them. A mark of ownership and destination. So the correct items get to the chosen destination. If you're a Christian you have been stamped with a mark of ownership. That stamp is the Holy Spirit. This guarantees – a word used in Paul's experience of contemporary commerce and trade – that you will arrive where God has chosen. No confusion and no one missing!) ¹⁴ *who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,...*

Let's say as a merchant you want to make a purchase, but you don't have the cash right now. You make a down payment: a guarantee that you are going to buy the goods and also that you will complete the transaction by providing the rest of the

money as agreed. In our salvation the Holy Spirit is the guarantee. His been given 'in' us so that we belong to Christ and He is coming back for us.

Philippians: We just consider 3 more texts. Philippians 1:6. This is a favourite of many, who derive great confidence from it. ⁶ *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.* Who began the good work? Well, God, of course! Who will carry on the work? God will – through the Spirit. Who was it that made you interested in the Gospel? Who brought you to believe? Who's kept you to this very moment? Who's been doing all this? God.

Would God begin things that He doesn't finish? No! That's why we are so confident: that God will keep working in our life until the Lord Jesus Christ comes back. We are confident about this.

1 Peter: Here we are reminded that all the Apostles taught the same thing. Note the great certainty again. 1 Peter 1:3- ³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* ⁴ *to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,* ⁵ *who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* ⁶ God has an inheritance for you, into which you are going to enter. The inheritance is kept for you, and you are kept for the inheritance.

Can you imagine God having 'adopted sons' and having an inheritance for them and continuing to look after them, but the sons not finally receiving and enjoying that inheritance? "It's an impossible thought", says Peter, "Blessed be God who has saved us by His mercy." We will be saved to the inheritance, because we are being kept by the power of God through faith for this salvation, which is ready to be reveal in the last time. ⁹ *obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

The final reading: 1 John 5:13 John wrote this lovely letter and he tells us towards the end why he wrote it. ¹³ *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God (do you?) that you may know that you have eternal life.* That's how we walk through the world. The Christian life is not easy. Its pain is real. The tears flow. But we walk through the world, nonetheless, knowing that we have eternal life!

These have just been examples of Scriptural texts. There are many more. If you reject the 5 Points of the Compass you are rejecting the Word of God.

The third item of our two week study of part (a) of this topic is, to follow on from the statement of the doctrine of our certain, final preservation; the sample of Scriptural references which prove this to be so; and now to contemplate and learn from the various

⁶ This reading continues: ⁶ *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,* ⁷ *so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* ⁸ *Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,* ⁹ *obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

'pictures' or illustrations of this great truth.

All the pictures, God's Word uses, underline the fact that for the true believer: you can't be lost!

We have referred to the term 'eternal life'. What does 'eternal mean'? Does it just mean 'everlasting'. Well yes, this can easily be proved from the New Testament. But more! It actually refers to the very life of God. You have received, at the time of your conversion, the very life of God. Can God die? Or grow old? No. If life is eternal can it be taken away? The very word. The very picture'. The very vocabulary used, is the proof: we can't be lost.

Then there's the phrase 'born again'. Now in the physical sense children can die but they can't be unborn. Now we have just seen that those who are truly born again have eternal life. Can they be 'unborn' spiritually? Is there a reverse process to being born, either physically as with a new child or spiritually as with a newly converted Christian. The Christian is 'born again'. This 'picture' or illustration has no reversal.

Then consider the picture of being members of Christ's body: He is the Head and we are the members of the body. Some are fingers, eyes, ears and toes. Can you imagine Christ's body with a finger missing? An ear missing? A toe missing or an eye missing? Or ultimately just being the Head?

Then, we are Christ's 'bride' when you form a Christian Church. Can you imagine the 'Lamb' at the wedding supper of the Lamb having no Bride? (Revelation 19:6-9)⁷

We are God's building. We are all separate bricks in a building made into a dwelling place for God. (1 Peter 2:5) This is another 'picture which is used. Can you imagine God's dwelling place with a hole in the wall because of missing Christians?

Above all, the 'picture' that we are God's sons. Can you imagine Christ, the eternally begotten Son, as the elder brother of we, the created, fallen, redeemed and now saved, sitting at table and there are empty chairs?

So it all comes together: the great comfort, that we can't be lost!

You've just become a Christian. The world is laughing at you. There are so many

7 The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

"Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;

⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure"—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

things that you don't know about. So many things of which you're not sure. Still things that you doubt! But you have come to Christ – committed your full trust in Him alone. Yet you wonder if you can keep going? And of course **you** can't. But you will!

You wonder if you can cope. You can't. But you will! Because God Himself will ensure, if you are truly His, that you will not be lost. That you will safely arrive in heaven.

Difficulties in your life appear that weren't there a few weeks ago. Perhaps not even there yesterday. Some are like jungles through which you can't see any path. Some situations which are so dark, that you wonder how you will survive. But you see, this is what to expect on the road to heaven. We don't know what will be at its next turn. But we do know that we will walk that path, however tortuous it is and end up safely in heaven. Nothing can alter that.

You're engaged in Christian work. It's Christ's work chosen for you. You might see someone come to faith in Christ. And in your estimation you consider that they have a meagre background, knowing so little and having such an unhelpful home, that there doesn't seem to be anything on that person's side. It's our duty to help new Christians, first of all by praying for them and then introducing them into a helpful local church. The first should be forthcoming but what about the second? Where do you find one today?

Nevertheless, if they are truly the Lord's they will be in heaven, on equal terms with you and me and every other true Christian who ever lived.

There are many challenges in the Word of God. There are many things that make us ashamed. Pages that should make us weep like children.

But there are many comforts in the Word of God: If you belong to Christ you are His forever!

[2287]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.
Amen_**