

A Christmas Series: The Doctrines of Grace in the Coming of Christ

THE PERSEVERANCE OF CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE

John 10:27-30

Intro: This morning I am concluding a Christmas series which I started on the first Sunday in December of last year. As I think that most of you know, I was working in what the Scriptures teach about the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with the doctrine of salvation. It is very clearly taught in the New Testament that the Lord Jesus did not come to earth, born of the virgin Mary, to establish His Kingdom over all of the world. His disciples originally thought that was His purpose. That was the reason that they rejected any talk about His death. When the Lord first mentioned to His disciples that “He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, **and be killed, and be raised again the third day**” (Matt. 16:21), Peter rebuked the Lord strongly saying, “Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee” (Matt. 16:22). And right up to the time when the Lord was arrested, Peter still did not understand the purpose for which the Lord had come into the world. You will remember that when Judas came with a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, Peter pulled out his sword and attacked the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then the Lord rebuked Peter, telling him to put his sword back into its sheath, and adding, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11). This, too, was a reference to His death – drinking from the cup which the Father had given Him to drink. This was evidence of the perseverance of the Lord in doing the will of the Father.

As the Lord met with His disciples in the Upper Room just shortly before His arrest and ultimately His death, we read these words in John 13:1,

1 Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end (John 13:1).

John 5:30 tells us that the Lord had not come to do His own will, but the will of the Father Who had sent Him. And then in John 19:30, as the Lord was hanging on the Cross and just before He died, He uttered those words that should lift praise out of our hearts, “It is finished.” The Lord let nothing stand in the way of the completion of His mission to secure salvation for “His own.” This is the perseverance of Christ.

We don't know for sure but it seems reasonable to expect that Peter and the other disciples had heard about the angel's appearance to Joseph when he discovered that Mary was going to have a baby. As unbelievable as it seemed to him, it appeared that Mary had been unfaithful to him, and so he was preparing to break his engagement with her. But just at that time the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said,

20 . . . Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins (Matt.

1:20b-21).

But how could Mary's child "save His people from their sins" unless He became a Savior? And how could He become their Savior unless He took upon Himself the penalty of their sins? And how could He do that unless He died as their Substitute?

And is it not reasonable to think that the apostles had heard of the appearance of the angel of the Lord to the shepherds, and the message that was given to the shepherds. The shepherds were afraid of the appearance of the angel of the Lord, as Joseph had been, but for a different reason. But what did the angel of the Lord tell the shepherds? You all know the message very well, but let me repeat it for you. The angel said,

10 . . . Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:10b-11).

The teaching of the OT was that there could only be the forgiveness of sins through death. The thousands upon thousands of animals that had been sacrificed from the beginning of time, carried that message.

That great Messianic passage in the OT, Isaiah 53 carried that same message. Of course not everyone understood that message, but many did! And it was written in Scripture. It is permanently on record. Let me read it to you. **(Read Isaiah 53.)**

The disciples should have known this great truth. The doctrines of grace give us in a simplified but thorough statement of the truths regarding our salvation.

The Bible gives us the only true teaching about ourselves. We are all sinners. We are sinners by nature and sinners by choice. We are

alienated from God because of our sin, and we are unable to do anything to remedy the situation. In fact, by nature we are not interested in God. But God in His marvelous grace has had mercy upon us. And He sent the Lord Jesus Christ into the world to be our Savior because there was no other way we could be saved. We are all totally depraved by sin. This does not mean that we are all as bad as we can be, but it means that we have been ruined by sin, all of us, totally. We can't save ourselves regardless of how we might try. We are under divine judgment facing eternal punishment. The only way we could possibly be saved was for a man to come into this world who was not a sinner, who would take our penalty upon himself, that we might be saved from the judgment of God. That Man has come. He was the Son of God. He was virgin-born. He was without sin. He was not under the sentence of death all of us are. But He Who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Jesus Christ came into the world to be the Savior of sinners because there was no other way that we could be saved. So the coming of Christ into the world was evidence of our total hopelessness and helplessness. He came not just to do part of the work of salvation; *He came to do it all! Salvation is not part a work of man, and part a work of God. It is all a work of God.*

But did Jesus Christ come to save everyone? Is God omnipotent? Is there anything that is impossible with God? He Who made us, who made the heavens and the earth, is there anything that is too hard for Him? The angel of the Lord told Joseph that Mary's child was to be named Jesus "for He shall save His people from their sins," from the penalty of their sins, from the power of their sins, and eventually from sin itself. God determined in eternity past that He would save sinners, *but the Bible teaches us that he sovereignly chose the very people He intended to save.*

If Christ died for all, then all would be saved. You and I who are saved are not saved because we figured it all out for ourselves, but because the Lord chose us, Christ died for us, and the Holy Spirit has drawn us to Christ. Christ died to secure our salvation. None of us deserved to be saved. It is all because of God's love for us, and His grace which has been extended to us through the preaching of the Gospel.

We don't know who the elect of God are. We are to preach the Gospel to everyone, to every human being. And all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved. But the whole work of salvation is God's work, and all whom He has chosen will be saved.

God did not choose us because of anything good or meritorious that He saw in us. Why He chose any of us is a secret locked up in the heart of God. Perhaps you remember in an earlier message in this series that I read to you from **Romans 3** where we have God's picture of the sinful, human heart. Man does not seek God, but God seeks man. If the Lord waited for us to seek Him, to seek Christ, to seek salvation, He would wait forever because no one would come. But God has not only chosen us. But Christ has died for us. And it is the Holy Spirit Who seeks us, and Who draws us to Christ. And I hope that you remember that I cited Saul of Tarsus as an example of one who was drawn to Christ by the irresistible grace of God. But actually we are all examples of God's irresistible grace. Remember John 6:37:

All that the Father giveth Me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

And place along side of these words of our Lord, the words we find in John 6:44:

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

You see, these were the issues that made it necessary for the Son of God to be born into the human family that He might die to save all of those whom the Father had chosen and given to Him. And so I hope none of us will ever forget:

- 1) T for Total Depravity.
- 2) U for Unconditional Election.
- 3) L for Limited Atonement, not that there was any limitation upon the salvation that we have in Christ, but that the death of Christ was for the purpose of saving those who the Father had chosen and sent Him to save.
- 4) I for Irresistible Grace. The Lord is perfectly able to reach the hearts of all those whom He has chosen to save.

But we have one point remaining, the "P" in the word TULIP. What is it? The "Perseverance of the Saints."

In considering the doctrines which are spelled out (in a sense) by the use of the word TULIP, and relating it all to the coming of Christ into the world, we see in Total Depravity why it was necessary for the Lord Jesus Christ to come into the world. Man has been so totally affected and ruined by sin, that there is no possibility that any person, man, woman, or child, throughout the whole world in every generation, could make himself, or herself, acceptable to God. Man's hope for salvation, for the

forgiveness of sins, and for eternal acceptance with God, rests totally and only in Jesus Christ and His death on the Cross. That is why Jesus Christ came into the world. He is the One and Only Savior.

The “u,” “l,” and “i” tell us the plan of God in salvation. Since man would not come to God, God sovereignly chose those whom He intended to save. When Christ died, He died to secure the salvation of those who were the chosen, or the elect of God. And since even the elect would not come to Christ on their own, God, by the working of His Spirit, convicts and draws His chosen ones to Christ, even to the point where all that is required for salvation is a gift from God, including our faith. Cf. Eph. 2:8-10.

But then when we come to the last letter, “p,” the emphasis is upon the effect that salvation has on the lives of those who really know the Savior.

Now turn with me to the Gospel of John, chapter 10, verses 27 through 30. These are words spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And they contain words which help us in understanding the doctrine of salvation, or, as I have been referring to them, the doctrines of grace.

In verse 11 of this chapter we are told this by the Lord Jesus:

I am the good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.

This tells us that when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross, He died for “the sheep,” those chosen by God for salvation.

As the Lord was teaching these wonderful truths, the Jews who were listening to Him, argued with Him, saying that He was not being clear in what He was teaching them. But in verse 25 the Lord said that He had told them plainly, but the problem was that they didn’t believe Him. And then our Lord went on in verse 26 to say this:

But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

How can you tell if you are one of the Lord’s sheep? You hear His voice. You don’t argue with Him; you hear the Word of God eagerly and with understanding. You receive it not as just man’s words, but like those believers in Thessalonica did, you receive it as the Word of God. You receive it as the truth. The Lord knows who His sheep are; we don’t. But He providentially leads those of us who know Him, so that we are put in

John 10:27-30 (6)

contact with those He intends to save. It may be a family member, or a friend, or someone we have just met. Sheep hear the Word. They believe the Word. And here we come to the truth of Perseverance, the Perseverance of the Saints, “and they follow Me.” This means that they want to be with the Lord. They want to do His will. And this is not just now and then that they pay attention to the Word, but it is a constant thing with those who are the Lord’s sheep. They follow the Good Shepherd. Their lives are forever changed. They have received the gift of eternal life, and they shall never perish. Here the Lord Jesus used a double negative. IN the Greek it is οὐ μὴ. “Never” is a good translation. It means that there is not the slightest possibility that anyone who has received eternal life would ever lose it. We have the Lord’s own words for this.

The question frequently comes up especially when a person dies, but it also comes up when we are trying to help someone who has some special needs: Is this person one of the Lord’s sheep? Is this person a child of God? Is he saved? Is she saved? How can you tell?

Well, years ago this person may have made a profession of faith, and was baptized, but he hardly ever goes to church. He is a good person. But there are a lot of good people from a human standpoint, but that does not make them a Christian. How can you and I tell that we are saved?

There is one way: Do we follow the Lord? Are we living to please our-selves, or are we seeking to pattern our lives according to the Bible? The Apostle Paul said, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

The evidence that we know the Lord is to be seen in the way we live. We seek by God’s grace to live by the Word. We don’t follow the world; we follow the Lord.

There is one book of the Bible that was written to help us with this all important question: *the first epistle of John*. There is nothing more important that any of us has to do than to make sure that we really have eternal life. The evidence that we are saved is that we persevere in obey-ing the Lord, in loving His people, in being faithful to the teaching of Scripture concerning all things, but especially in what the Bible teaches us about the Lord Jesus Christ. We are taught to persevere, but there is in the heart of every true believer the God-given desire to live according to the will of God. None of us does it perfectly, but we must seek to do it continuously. May our obedience to the Lord be evident in all that we are, and in all that we do.