

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Video Lecture Series

by Robert D. McCurley, ThM

STUDY GUIDE

Module 5:
**SOTERIOLOGY—
THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION**

Lecture 10:
**THE PERSEVERANCE OF
THE SAINTS**



The John Knox Institute
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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

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Module 5

Soteriology—the Doctrine of Salvation

1. Introduction to Soteriology
2. The Doctrine of Union with Christ
3. The Doctrines of Effectual Calling & Regeneration
4. The Doctrine of Saving Faith
5. The Doctrine of Repentance
6. The Doctrine of Justification
7. The Doctrine of Adoption
8. The Doctrine of Sanctification
9. The Doctrine of Good Works
- 10. The Doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints**
11. The Doctrine of Assurance of Grace and Salvation

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Module 5:

SOTERIOLOGY—THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

Lecture 10:

The Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints

Introduction

It should be fairly obvious that the Christian life is more like a marathon than it is a sprint. It's spread over a believer's whole life in Christ, with all the ups and downs that that involves. In other words, it involves perseverance to the end. When Paul reached the end of his own life, he wrote, in 2 Timothy chapter 4, verses 7 and 8: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course"—or race—"I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Believers are called to persevere in faith, and they are promised that they will be preserved until the end of their life.

Theme: *The doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints*

I. Scriptural Basis

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."—John 10:27–28.

1. Jesus reveals himself as the Good Shepherd.
 - a. The believer's perseverance is secured in:
 - 1) God's divine election;
 - 2) Christ's definitive atonement;
 - 3) Christ's ongoing power as their Shepherd.
 - b. The theme of God as the shepherd of his people is throughout the Old Testament

2. Christ's sheep hear his voice.
3. Jesus knows his sheep; he gives his sheep eternal life.
4. Eternal salvation, eternal life is unalterable; it is permanent.

Questions:

1. In John 10, verses 27 to 28, what did the Lord Jesus claim to be to his people? Then what are his people shown to be in Psalm 23?

2. How do Christ's people respond when they hear his voice? What does Christ do for them when they follow him? Can they be taken from him?

II. Doctrinal Overview

1. Defining of the Perseverance of the Saints.
 - a. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 17, paragraph 1.
2. Perseverance is rooted in the very nature of salvation.
 - a. It is based on the Doctrine of Election.
 - 1) Not on the power of men or free will of men.
 - 2) Rooted in the unchangeable election of God
 - b. It depends on the believer's union with Christ.
 - c. Christ's death, and his redemptive work secures Perseverance.
 - d. It is reinforced by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
 - e. It is reinforced by Christ's High Priestly intercession in heaven.
 - f. The Lord has purchased an inheritance for his people that can't be lost.
3. The Christian's responsibility.
 - a. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 17, paragraph 3.
 - b. Includes both God's sovereignty and the believer's responsibility.

4. Those who forsook the faith and perished in their sin.
 - a. A profession of faith, or the actual possession of faith.
 - b. Warnings in Scripture.

Questions

1. Please define the meaning of “The Perseverance of the Saints” using *The Westminster Confession of Faith*.

2. What is the root of a believer’s perseverance in faith? Does it depend on the power or ability of man, or on man’s free will?

3. How is the Doctrine of Election related to understanding the Doctrine of Perseverance?

4. How does Christ’s death and completed work affect the Perseverance of the Saints?

5. What is the work of the Holy Spirit in the Perseverance of the Saints?

6. Using Scripture passages, please show how salvation includes the promise that God’s people will be brought to glory.

7. Does a man have any responsibility to persevere in his faith? How does that relate to God's sovereignty over his salvation?

8. How do we make sense of those who were professing Christians, but they forsook the faith, some of them ultimately perishing in their sins? How does Scripture warn us about this?

III. Polemical Exposition

1. *Historic Arminianism places Perseverance on man's free will.*
2. *Easy-believism and Eternal Security in modern evangelicalism.*
3. *Lutherans maintain Perseverance apart from Election.*
4. *Roman Catholicism repudiates Perseverance altogether.*

Questions:

1. What are the errors of Historic Arminianism regarding Perseverance of the Saints?

2. What are the three problems with "easy-believism" in modern evangelicalism?

3. What is the error of Lutheran doctrine in regard to perseverance unto salvation?

4. Explain how Roman Catholic doctrine repudiates perseverance altogether.

IV. Practical Exposition

1. The believer's confidence is by God's power, in God's love, by God's grace, not in themselves.

2. The believer is responsible and culpable for spiritual carelessness.

3. The believer must study both the cause and the cure of spiritual declension.

4. The goal of the Christian life is finishing well, not just ending well.

5. The believer perseveres by keeping their eyes fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Questions:

1. What is the foundation for the believer's confidence? How much should the believer rely on their own ability?

2. Is the Christian believer responsible and culpable for spiritual carelessness or backsliding? What are the causes of this? What are the solutions of backsliding? How can it be prevented?

3. What did Jesus mean, in John 15:5, when he said, “Without me you can do nothing”?

4. The goal of the Christian life is finishing well, not just beginning well. What are some practical ways of pursuing this, as suggested in this lecture?

V. Self-Reflection

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”—Hebrews 12:1–2. Meditate upon these words and consider what this portion of Scripture teaches you about the Perseverance of the Saints. What are the encouragements, the guidance, and the reminders about “running the race”?
