

# Perseverance

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Romans 8:25

We have more to learn in Romans 8 – a chapter whose riches seem endless. And that is because they are! I hope you are not growing weary of your best treasures, as God’s hope-filled children!

Our message today is how exactly the great mountain of hope makes the Christian to eagerly persevere and press toward the Lord, to press onward and upward to His glorious presence. That is what a living hope through His resurrection does. That is what a name in heaven and a place for you there does!

So as eager children awaiting a gift, we are to be stretching ourselves until that day, standing on tip-toes for seeing our Savior! Nothing else can possibly satisfy like Him!

Here then we have one of the coolest words in the New Testament. “*Perseverance*.” The Greek word is a compound of ‘under’ and ‘stand’ – literally, to ‘stand under’, like an athlete beneath his weights. Sometimes a more passive idea is meant, and so the word “patience” is used. But the more active idea of perseverance fits better here.

John Stott has a good balance: ‘We are to wait neither so eagerly that we lose patience, nor so patiently that we lose our expectation.’

(Repeat)

Which one do you have the most trouble with? Losing patience and growing frustrated? Or losing interest and growing lazy about faith? Both are dangerous.

Paul is saying we persevere because of hope. You persevere because of the reality of what is yours in Jesus as a saved child of God. And just as important, you persevere, not because of your perseverance! No, you persevere because of the Lord's perseverance!

You are to make your calling and even your election sure. That is, we make what is already sure more sure to our minds and experience. And being made sure, we step out all the more eagerly and fully as believers on their way to heaven. Hope felt is what gives you heart! And we need heart!

Someone said God never promises us an easy time, only a safe arrival! Obstacles and enemies stand in your path. They oppose and freeze your hope. They want to take your heart! They want to take your feet off the path! Remember the sign in the classic movie, Wizard of Oz? – “Haunted Forest – Witch’s Castle, One Mile – I’d turn back if I were you!” And the cowardly Lion says, “OK” and turns to run away!

Oh, but you Christian cannot turn back! You know that greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world! The power of God is greater by far than your weakness. His grace is greater by far than all your sins! Christ in you, the hope of glory, is greater than all the world combined! And the best is yet to come. And it will come. It must come! And you will see Him!

And so this future reality aids us now, making us children of hope, children of eager expectation, children who persevere not by their own strength or goodness, but on account of our God and Savior.

Think of a child promised a great time and vacation in Hawaii. He will be there for a week. All luxury. Fun at the beach. Great exploration.

Excellent food every day. Ahhhh! You can't wait to board the plane. You can't wait for that day to come!

But it is not your hope that makes it come! It is not your perseverance and patience that produces that wonderful vacation. No, it is your father's credit card! (ha ha) It is the provision made for you by mom and dad. And if they break their promise, how they hear about!

So is your persevering and eagerly waiting hitched to the Lord. It is His promise and perseverance to you! If His promise is not felt by you, or is a flimsy promise to you, oh, how that will shrink your eager and living hope! It has to! The more real the mountain of his glory and salvation are to your faith and heart, the more hope-filled you must be, the more eager, leaning into the prize of His high calling to you.

Our message is simple then. Your eager hoping and persevering is lifted up to that mountain just as that mountain is lifted up to your faith and love. Fill your hearts with the vision received by faith in the Bible, and your hearts will be lifted up on the wings of eager perseverance.

This is for every believer, every Christian, young and old, weak and strong. This is not something just for high achievers in the church. It is for you. Let us walk around this great mountain of hope, and consider ten sides to fill our souls! Let us say to each one – that is mine!

The 1<sup>st</sup> that is yours is God's unchangeable character. He who is your God is – wait for it – **I AM!**

The God of your salvation is unmovable. And God Himself **IS** your salvation! "I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed." (Malachi 3:6) Hebrews 13:5 states: "Jesus Christ: the same yesterday, today and forever!"

There is salvation in the very name of God – I AM! Jesus! He is your Savior on your best day and your worst!

Can you quote Philippians 1.6? You should! "He who has begun a good work in you shall complete it at the day of our Lord Jesus Christ!" That verse begins with the all-important word "HE": He Himself, He in His changeless character, He in his almighty and eternal and faithful Being, is the Rock on which you are built. You have been engraved upon the hands of eternal unchangeability. When God ceases to be God, His people will cease to be saved. Which is never!

The 2<sup>nd</sup> rock – as if you needed one – is His purpose or plan. This is coming up in Rom. 8:28-30 – God's predestination.

Eph. 1.11 announces this mountain: "we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to His purpose who works **all things** after the counsel of His will." God's all-encompassing plan is to bring forth a new heavens and new earth. The fall and the entrance of sin and evil were under this plan. And the devil, death, hell, all evil – these do not win in this plan! Praise God! "The Christian's place in heaven was assured before there was a single angel there to help arrange the accommodations!"

How can it not comfort you to hear that there is a Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world? Or that grace was given to you from before the world was made? 2 Timothy 1:9. When were you saved? From eternity past! God loves you with an everlasting love! God has chosen you for Himself. And his purpose is unbreakable, as God is sovereign.

This leads to #3 – God’s design have all things be summed up in His own Son.

The greatness of God’s love and grace is bound up in the Father giving you His Son. That too is before us in Romans 8. That God the Son would be your own kinsmen Redeemer! It is like your very best friend, a perfect friend, is God and He has promised to save you by himself! If you have the Son and the Son has you, you have all things. To have the Son is to have, presently, eternal life. He has said to your soul: ‘I give unto you eternal life and no man shall pluck you out of my hand!’ The Father, Son and Spirit all enfold their fingers around you. There is no hand like this! The very hand of God!

See 4<sup>th</sup>, God’s truthfulness. Three most blessed words are: ‘He Is Faithful!’ God’s veracity, fidelity, loyalty, integrity – these are all tied to saving you! ‘I will never leave you or forsake you!’ says He! He cannot lie to you for he cannot lie to himself! And he has vowed by his own name to save his people from their sins! See that your faith is not in the word of the church, or a council, or angels, or men. ‘Thus says the Lord!’ is the foundation on which you stand!

His are the words of One who cannot lie; the promises of One who cannot fail; the truth of One who can never be deceived; the pronouncement of One who can never be shaken or moved.

The more His exceeding great and precious promises are known, believed, trusted, and enjoyed, the greater our hearts leap for joy, and are filled with hope and assurance in believing! What a great God and Savior!

And 5<sup>th</sup>, this brings us to the centerpiece of the Bible, which is the Gospel – Christ and His salvation.

Let's face it – the greatest enemy to your soul is your sin. And that is because God is perfectly holy, perfectly righteous, and his justice will crush you because of your sin and sinfulness! So God, in order to save anybody, must save them from God! We must be saved from His righteous and perfect wrath. How can He accept creatures who are His very enemies, born in sin, who sin every day against Him in thought, word and deed?

This is the wonder of the cross! Jesus atoned for sins not his own! He is the only substitute before the judgment seat of a holy God. To put it so simply, Jesus has paid your bill, your debt! Every sin, all sins, all your iniquities, in full! His work removes unrighteousness and gives righteousness to believers.

So God not only has no wrath against his people, but he is entirely pleased and reconciled to you! You, my friend, are bought with the blood of God! Now the holiness and justice of God are your friends through Jesus. You need not fear the holiness and righteousness of God. Rather, you may fully love and adore these qualities. God is

supremely merciful and loving to forgive you. But He is righteous, just and holy to do so, seeing you only in Christ!

Oh think of it brothers and sisters! It would be unjust, unfair and unrighteous of God to treat you in any other way! You have no sins! You are the righteousness of God in Christ!

**Number 6, your union with Jesus in His death and resurrection,** not only removes all of your sin, but removes you – positionally – from the sinful kingdom of which you were a part in the Adam’s family.

While there in Adam, death was your king. But now you have died already in his death, and have *been judged already*. Colossians 3:3-4 says that you have died and your life is hid with Christ in God – and that when Christ our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory!

Instead, you are now seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. You are part of the new humanity destined to live not for this perishing world but for the world to come, whose powers you have already felt.

You are raised up with Him – ascended with Him – ruling with Him – and returning with Him.

We do not yet see that with your eyes when you look in the mirror – but put on the Scripture glasses of hope, and you will be changed into that glorious and heavenly image, transformed by the Spirit shining in the face of King Jesus!

Why this world is likened to an exile for us, and we are pilgrims in it.

Our rest, our peace is not here; because our home is not here. Jesus has gone before to prepare for you a place. Oh, why do we spend so much time on the world we are soon leaving! And so little on the world where we shall soon be forever!

This leads to **number 7** – Jesus died for us, we died and rose in Christ, but now Jesus lives for us! He is presently your great high priest who represents you this morning before his Father, in the holy of holies above!

Your living head above is your full and perfect Mediator, who is perfectly fitted in every way to be your prophet, priest and king.

He is your eternal Daysman, your universal Umpire, who delivers the riches of God to you, represents you before all heaven, and who has all authority and power by which He has already made you his own as He is bringing you to Himself.

How it would energize your hearts, your prayers, your desires if you could hear him praying for you – “Father, I have manifested your name to them; they are yours; I have paid for them; they are mine; I have them as jewels on my breastplate; I pray for them, for their salvation, their faith, their lives, their sanctification; keep them, for I will that they be with me where I am, that they may behold and share in my glory, which I have attained for them!”

This is one of the chief glories of our Jesus – that He never, ever loses so much as a single lamb from all of His great flock! None fall through the cracks! There is never a word from him like, “well, I tried to save this one, and had him for a while, but Satan snatched him out; or, I just had a moment of weakness, or fumbled that o one!”

Oh, what a refuge, what a safe haven is Jesus to all who come to Him!  
He saves to the uttermost ALL who come to Him!

Now we are not yet done – we come to the effectual work of the Spirit in persevering with the saint. **Eighthly**, his call and entrance into your life is an effectual one – raising the dead bones of dry, dead sinners to be alive to God!

The life you have from him is an eternal life. What does that mean? It means, a heavenly life, a new life, an incorruptible seed is planted. There is that about you, believer, that is the new creation begun on earth.

There is much in you that is still from below to be sure. Paul does not say in Colossians 3 to mortify your members on the earth, for nothing! But the greater part of you, the most important and central part of you – the real you – is redeemed, bought by God, and inseparably His.

You have a new heart, a new mind, a new life, the firstfruits of an eternal harvest. You are the temple of God, the body of Christ, the bride of the bridegroom, and the Spirit abides in you. You may and do grieve the Spirit, but He will, He can never divorce you. Greater is He that is in you – if He can be driven away by Satan, the world, or your sins – then He is not greater in you!

God knows how to keep his fire burning in the midst of an ocean of corruption; a fire which the devil cannot put out.

Now **number 9** – the nature of the covenant of grace. The covenant arrangement – including your adoption – is everlasting, steadfast and sure.

We have seen that God is entirely self-moved in His love for us. There is nothing in us to be the basis of salvation. So He has self-committed himself to the terms of His covenant, his bond of grace. He has graciously entered into this contract with you, that He will always be your God and Father, and you shall always be His People.

There are too many church members who have only come to the door of this covenant promise, and have not entered in. Which is why we see those who on the outside look like believers but who turn away from the Lord.

Somebody has wisely said: “the saints persevere; and the reason so many in the church do not persevere, is because they are not saints.”

A true believer has been raised to newness of life and has God’s banner of love over them. And this results in a war with unbelief, pride and sin in all of its forms. Sanctification is the *fruit* of the covenant, and not the *root*. We are not saved because we are holy, we are holy because we are saved. Without holiness, without this proof, there is no heaven, no glory, no salvation in the first place!

This is at the root of what Paul will open in the inseparable nature of salvation in the last part of Romans 8.

**One last point here** – that is what Jesus is going to do.

We read in 8:29-30 that the believer is glorified *already* in the plan of God. All who are predestined, called, justified, *are* glorified – an unbreakable chain of God’s purpose.

But think about the actual glorifying of His people yet future and to be accomplished. This is like the dessert to the whole meal; this is the

bigger but easier, better and most desired part of His salvation. Jesus has waded through the blood of the battle field. This now is His crowning victory yet to be! If he has done the harder part in weakness, how much more will he do the easier and completed part in strength?!

Add that He would lose great glory and a greater name for himself, if He were to falter here, if there were to be a ‘yeah, but He couldn’t bring some of his people home...’ This is like being pregnant all the way up to delivery, and then nothing!

Jesus has all the power and authority, the rank and desire, the vow and purpose – to bring in a new heavens and new earth to the full glory of God! Nothing stands in the way except his own timing. All things are ready! Nothing can stand in His way!

Does this whet your appetite for things above? Does this fill your tired and tired heart with new vigor and joy? Does it translate into patience perseverance for you, and persevering patience to trust in the Lord?

*<sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? (Psa 42:2) Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence. (Psa 42:5)*

Oh, see that this is truly for you, believer! This is not for those who have no hope – those yet in their sins, in the world, without Christ!

God’s own full and demonstrated promise is that you have reason to hope and to hope fully! He promises you will never perish. Notice, He does not promise you will never sin. What are we to think of the sins of the saint?

Several mistakes should be cleaned up before we close:

1. It is a mistake to believe that God promises perfection in this life. He has not. John tells us that to deny sin is make God himself a liar! William Secker said: “though Christians be not kept altogether from falling, yet they are kept from falling altogether.” Beware of perfectionism, which leads to legalism.
2. It is a mistake to think that sin is ultimate. Sensitive souls are led to mistake their falls as beyond repair. “Oh, how could a Christian ever sin so!” That is not the Bible talking but the world. “It may be that we are sinful,” said John Cotton, “but God did not love us for our goodness, neither will he cast us off for our wickedness.” If sin is ultimate, we are all doomed. But God is greater than all your sin.
3. A third mistake is think then that sin is not dangerous. Because sin cannot ultimately destroy the believer, does not mean that sin is not sin. “It is a glorious truth that God will keep his people – but it is an abominable falsehood that sin will do them no harm.” The gospel message is not that sin is no big deal and brushes it aside; it is that sin is a very big deal, but that God provides a way of salvation FROM sin, not IN sin. Hate your sin! Repent of sin!

Well, that should suffice for our banquet today. May the Lord expand and increase your assurance of His grace and salvation in your life. May He give you abundant peace in believing! Plunge yourselves in the love of God!

And do not think you can do without the means of grace to help you. See how this message drives you into the Word of God, into prayer, into the bond of fellowship in the church, into prizing and guarding the Lord’s Day and holy worship zealously! May God Himself fill your tank with the fuel for a hope that moves you to fully persevere!