

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: November 9, 2014

Sermon Title: Perseverance

Series Title: A Study of 2 Peter and Jude

Text: 2 Peter 2:17-22; 3:17, 18

Author: Patrick J. Griffiths ©2014

Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

Date: November 9, 2014
 Title: Perseverance
 Text: 2 Peter 2:17-22; 3:17, 18
 Theme: Persevering / continuing in faith is the natural and inevitable outcome of having faith in Christ.

Introduction:

The Bible often speaks of the need to persevere in the faith. It presents falsehood as a threat to continuing in the faith. Because it calls us to persevere or continue, the threat of falling away must be genuine. How are we to hear the call to continue?

Perhaps the real question haunting us is, "Can the people of God every fall away from God forever?" The short answer is, "No." In other words, "Can a believer become an unbeliever?" Again, the short answer is, "No."

The issue of eternal security is a residual consequence of our study, but it is not the nature of our study. The issue of eternal security is in the work of Christ. If one understands what happens in the gospel, then the idea of reversing it through one's actions is impossible.

However, our study comes out of various passages in 1 and 2 Peter and will therefore focus on the passages throughout the New Testament warning us against falling away. We will look at the flavor of such passages in the greater scheme of things.

The Storyline:

Often when we live life in the valley, it is impossible to appreciate the larger panoramic view one might achieve when standing on the mountaintop. Yet when one clambers up to the mountaintop from the valley, the perspective provided changes everything. Our study in understanding the biblical thought of perseverance has greater clarity when we stand on the mountaintop. Getting to the top is not always easy, but it is necessary if one is to see the bigger picture. The biblical story is one of conflict, challenge, and conquest. The war found throughout the Bible is between the fulfillment of the Seed Promise and the thrust to see it fail by the Serpent's Seed. Satan works against fulfillment. He seeks to undermine both Seed Promise and Blood Picture.

In order to understand the smaller pieces of the biblical text, we need to place them within the larger context of the entire *Story*. What we need to do is step back and look at the whole and then zero in on the specific idea of continuing in the faith.

Outline:

First, the Seed Promise has intrinsic or embedded conflict (Gen. 3:15).

- And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel. (Gen. 3:15)

Prior to humanity's rebellion against God, Lucifer and certain angels already warred against God. The conflict noted in Genesis 3 was already present prior to Adam and Eve's initial rebellion. Genesis 3:15 captures this conflict.

Second, the serpent and his seed actively and persistently war against the promised Seed and His offspring (1 Peter 5:8-10).

- ⁸ Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. ¹⁰ After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. ¹¹ To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet. 5:8-11)

The statement found in 1 Peter 5:8-10 concerning the devil only echoes what is already noted in our initial text of Genesis 3:15. Luke notes this same idea in Luke 4:13.

- When the devil had finished every temptation, **he left Him until an opportune time.** (Luke 4:13)
- ³¹ Simon, Simon, behold, **Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat;** ³² but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. (Luke 22:31, 32)

Our Lord's comment in Luke 22:31, 32 speak of this conflict between the serpent's seed and the woman's.

Third, despite the devil's attempt to overthrow, God always wins (1 Thess. 5:23, 24; Romans 8:28-39; John 16:33).

- ²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ **Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.** (1 Thess. 5:23, 24)
- ²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:28-39)
- These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, **but take courage; I have overcome the world.** (John 16:33)

What God promises happens. Even apparent defeat leads to victory. We will look into this further under the study of **Sin and the Story**. Regardless of the difficulty the believer finds themselves in, God always preserves, He always rescues, and He always provides the way of escape so that they are able to endure it.

- Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, **you will never stumble**; (2 Pet. 1:10)
- and did not spare the ancient world, but **preserved Noah**, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; (2 Pet. 2:5)
- ⁷ and if **He rescued righteous Lot**, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men . . . ⁹ then **the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation**, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, (2 Pet 2:7, 9)
- ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. ¹³ **No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.** ¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. (1 Cor. 10:11-14)

It is not without effort, but the end is inevitable and certain. We flee idolatry by resting in His finished work. We resist the devil by resting in the provision of God.

- Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to **resist in the evil day**, and having done everything, to stand firm. (Eph. 6:13)
- Submit therefore to God. **Resist the devil** and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)
- **But resist him**, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. (1 Pet. 5:9)

Hence, God will always win.

Fourth, even though the end is certain and inevitable, the people of God are warned to guard against falling away (2 Peter 2:2, 3; 14, 15).

- ² **Many will follow their sensuality**, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; ³ and in their greed **they will exploit you** with false words; (2 Pet. 2:2, 3)
- ¹⁴ having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, **enticing unstable souls**, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; ¹⁵ **forsaking the right way**, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; (2 Pet. 2:14, 15)

Yet, how are we to read and understand these calls to continue in faith and to guard against falling away? This is a perceived problem consistently noted by the so-called warning passages in the Book of Hebrews. However, what the author of Hebrews says is consistent throughout

the New Testament. He is not noting something unknown or new. A question we should ask ourselves in looking at these various passages is, "To whom does the author write?"

Fifth, Scripture speaks of those who appear as churchgoers, as followers of Christ, falling away (2 Pet. 2:19-22).

- ²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, **they are again entangled in them and are overcome**, the last state has become worse for them than the first. ²¹ For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. ²² It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire." (2 Pet. 2:20-22)

Verse 19 describes our addictions. Our addictions overcome us and we become their prisoner. The language is so graphic. It occurs three times in the New Testament. Peter uses overcome twice (2 Pet. 2:19, 20). It means to vanquish, to make worse.

Verses 20 and 21 are troubling until you read verse 22. Verse 22 resolves the conflict. "Pollutions/corruptions" occur only here in the New Testament. "Entangle" is found only here and in 2 Timothy 2:4. The word "better" is the one used throughout the Book of Hebrews.

Those who apostatize, who abandon, who turn back and forsake Christ and His Church and who intentionally forget the gospel are those who were never changed. They kept the nature of the dog and pig and never partook of the divine nature.

- ¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ **They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.** (1 John 2:18, 19)

It is not a popular idea, but the New Testament speaks of the unsaved as those "outside the Church," and the saved as those "in the Church." We have created an entirely new category of those who profess Christ but have nothing to do with any local church. This, in the New Testament, is inconceivable. We have a tendency to grade one's spirituality on a curve, "God, however, does not grade on a curve, but on a cross." God lives in a "black and white world." He has no grey.

It is the same kind of language used in the parable of the soils (Mark 4:16-19).

- ¹⁶ In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; ¹⁷ and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸ And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, ¹⁹ but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. (Mark 4:16-19)

It is the same kind of language used in Matthew 7:21-23.

- ²¹ Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. ²² Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" ²³ And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS." (Matt. 7:21-23)

There are those who profess a form of Christian faith, but deny the power of the risen Christ. It is what Titus speaks of in Titus 1:16.

- They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed. (Titus 1:16)

The false claimant has either a profession without works or works without possession. In Matthew 7, they work, but do not know. In Titus, they claim to know, but do not work. The Book of James speaks to this idea when he writes, "faith without works is dead."

- ¹ My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. ² For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, ³ and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," ⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? ⁸ If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. ¹¹ For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. ¹⁴ What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? ¹⁷ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. ¹⁸ But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." ¹⁹ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰ But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵ In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶ For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. (James 2:1-26, NAS95)

The New Testament is clear; those who claim to love Christ also love His people. Faith's work is love (2 Peter 1:5-9).

Although participating in a church does not make one a Christian no more than visiting a garage makes one a mechanic or car, those who are Christians participate in the life of a Church just as those who are mechanics work in garages and cars typically are found in garages.

Sixth, the issue in perseverance is seed (2 Peter 1:3, 4).

- ³ seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. (2 Pet. 1:3, 4)

Cars, mechanics, and garages go together just as Christ, Christians, and Churches go together. Cars and mechanics exist in garages because it is part of their “nature” or “seed.”

Peter appears to strike this same theological chord. Those born of God, those who partake of His nature, containing His seed (2 Peter 1:3, 4) look quite differently than those who do not partake of His seed (2 Peter 1:19-22)

Those who are born of God have His seed in them. **His seed produces His fruit. God’s seed always germinates 100 percent of the time.** The prophet Isaiah spoke of this idea in Isaiah 55:11.

- ⁶ Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. ⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. ⁸ “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. ⁹ “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰ For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; ¹¹ **So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.** ¹² For you will go out with joy and be led forth with peace; The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, And all the trees of the field will clap their hands. ¹³ Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up, and instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up, And it will be a memorial to the LORD, For an everlasting sign which will not be cut off. (Isa. 55:6-13)

Listen to how the apostle John speaks to this idea (1 John 3:4-9).

- ⁴ Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. ⁵ You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. ⁷ Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸ the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ **No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.** ¹⁰ By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. . . ¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, (1 John 3:4-10, 17)

Thus, the issue of continuing in the faith is a matter of one’s nature caused by seed.

Seventh, for us, our assurance is in believing, not in doing. Moreover, it is because we believe, we do. The opposite is not equally true.

The invitation is to believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The invitation is not on trying harder to do better with the hope of making it to the end or of securing more reward. For the believing, such ends are already certain.

However, let us clarify this statement. The act of faith is not in faith, but in Christ. Three short statements are true.

1. Faith never operates in a vacuum.
2. Faith must always have an object.
3. The object of faith must always be valid.

Thus, faith in faith does not cause one to be a Christian, but having faith in Christ. Everyone has faith, but few have faith in Christ.

Eighth, although the threat is real, the believing can never fall away (Matt. 24:22-24).

- ²² Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. . . ²⁴ For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, **so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.** (Matt. 24:22, 24)

Again, this is not a study of election; nevertheless, **the doctrine of election does not lead to apathy, but to assurance.** Because of who God is and what He has done and does, and who we are in Christ, we are safe and secure from all alarm.

The devil is actively seeking to undermine and overthrow the offspring of the Seed Promise. It seems possible even probable that some will fail, but . . . election guarantees the outcome of our glorification.

Persevering in the faith does not rest on your ability to continue, but on His ability to keep. He does what you could not and cannot do. He saved you and He keeps you (John 10:28-30).

God's promise of eternal life is irrevocable (Titus 1:1-4). Election is God's guarantee to do what He says He will do. Individual perseverance is the fruit of Divine Preservation.

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. Today, I am not asking you if you believed, but do you believe.
2. Do not put your trust or confidence in a faith you had as a child or teenager, if that same faith is currently inoperative.
3. If you find yourself outside the Christian faith yet believing you once were, then today I invite you to believe anew. Come to Jesus and reunite with His Church.
4. Finally, as a believer rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ for He alone is our only means of rescue from sin and death.