

WHAT IS THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS?

by Michael A. Milton

TO THE GROUP LEADER: This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote.

1. Does the Scripture teach “once saved always saved” or “eternal security?” (5-9)

The truth is, neither of these appear anywhere in the Bible! They are theological terms used to express what is better termed “the perseverance of the saints,” a phrase that is used in the Bible in Rev. 14:12 (NAS). Help the group to see they need to use Bible terminology rather than the first two phrases.

2. Read 1 Peter 1:3-5 in more than one translation. According to these verses, to Whom does Peter credit salvation from beginning to the end? (9-13)

As you take the group through these verses, have them pick out from each the role God plays in salvation and the role we play. Keep pointing out how salvation is rooted in God and it is preserved by Him as well.

3. Define, in two ways, how someone gets saved: (13-19)

What a person has to do –

What God had to do –

Allow the group just a few minutes to give their responses. However, keep pointing them back to what God **had** to do because we were incapable due to our condition in sin. This means the things we did came only **after** the Holy Spirit did His work in changing our hearts, giving us the capability to respond.

4. Read Matthew 10:22; 24:13. The word “endure” is the same Greek word as perseverance in Revelation 14:12. What do we learn from these verses (keeping the context in mind)? (19-22)

Take the group from here and read Luke 8:9-15 (Luke’s version of the Parable of the Sower). Note what Luke adds to this discussion on enduring/persevering in verse 15 as the ESV translates the same word here as “patience.” Have them look over this parable, noting that each person in these four groups heard the word and responded in some way. The first two quickly walked away, but the third stayed longer, even until the harvest itself before being exposed. But it was only those in the fourth category who endured and made it to the end. They proved to be truly converted by two factors: they produced fruit and the persevered to the end.

5. Read very carefully what Jesus says in Matthew 7:21-23. List everything you can find about the people Jesus describes: What did they know, what did they do, and what did they fail to do? (22-27)

These people knew all the right things to do and say. They even recited the right “formula” – “In Jesus’ Name.” These are the type of people we would expect to see in most of our churches. However, their hearts were **never** converted, which became obvious as Jesus said He **never** knew them. These people would fit the third category in the Parable of the Sower. They never “fell away” from the faith! They showed some kind of connection with the truth, but the Truth never connected with them. They displayed all the signs of being a Christian, but instead of falling away, they stayed “in the church” but never got saved.

6. Every one of us have at least one sin we cannot seem to give up. How many times will God forgive us for that sin before He finally throws up His hands and says, “No more!”? (27-29)
Praise the God of all grace, that He Who began this good work of salvation in us promises He will complete the job (Phil.1:6).
7. One of the arguments made against “eternal security” is people feel they can live any way they want since they can’t lose their salvation. Is that an accurate assessment?
No one teaches or believes this! We teach that God has adopted us and become our Father. As a Father, He will discipline His children when we do wrong. He will no longer punish us, for that has been taken care of on the Cross, but He will discipline us. Go through Rom.8:12-17 and Heb.12:3-11 with the group.
8. How different might you live if you feared you would die with at least one unconfessed sin?
The beauty of the Gospel is that Jesus died and paid the penalty for *all* our sin. God will not punish you for a sin Jesus already took the punishment for! We must live not in fear, but in the assurance He has already forgiven us. Our Christian lives are to be lived in such a way as to be a reflection of His glorify, and we will enjoy a wonderful relationship with Him.

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class, noting other questions you might have. [By the way, if you do have any other questions about what you read, write them down here so you remember them at class time.]

APPLICATION

Hopefully, by now you have realized security in Christ does not mean living any way you want. God created you for one purpose – to glorify Him and spend the rest of eternity enjoying our relationship with Him. In order to do this, you need to learn to put God first in every area of your life. Therefore, what are those areas of your life where God needs to be put back on top? For that to happen, you need to make a plan, and get it started. Write out your plan here and put it on your calendar to check on your progress at the end of each month.

For Further Study

Dr. Milton gives a great list of helpful works. Here are two more.

Assured by God: Living in the Fullness of God’s Grace, Burk Parsons, editor. P&R, 2007.

The Enemy Within: Straight Talk about the Power and Defeat of Sin, Kris Lundgaard. P&R, 1998.

Find this and more at www.pcabookstore.com.