

2 Timothy Lesson 3 Articles

PERSEVERANCE

The biblical doctrines related to the Christian life are difficult to explain because they are presented in typically eastern, dialectical pairs. These pairs seem contradictory, yet both poles are biblical. Western Christians have tended to choose one truth and ignore or depreciate the opposite truth.

1. Is salvation an initial decision to trust Christ or a life-time commitment to discipleship?
2. Is salvation an election by means of grace from a sovereign God or a faith and repentant response on mankind's part to a divine offer?
3. Is salvation, once received, impossible to lose, or is there a need for continual diligence?

The issue of perseverance has been contentious throughout church history. The problem starts with seemingly conflicting passages of the NT.

1. texts on assurance
 - a. statements of Jesus in John's Gospel (John 6:37; 10:28–29)
 - b. statements of Paul (Rom. 8:35–39; Eph. 1:13; 2:5, 8–9; Phil. 1:6; 2:13; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:18)
 - c. statements of Peter (1 Pet. 1:4–5)
2. texts on the need for perseverance
 - a. statements of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 10:22; 13:1–9, 24–30; 24:13; Mark 13:13)
 - b. statements of Jesus in John's Gospel (John 8:31; 15:4–10)
 - c. statements of Paul (Rom. 11:22; 1 Cor. 15:2; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 1:6; 3:4; 5:4; 6:9; Phil. 2:12; 3:18–20; Col. 1:23; 2 Tim. 3:2)
 - d. statements of the author of Hebrews (2:1; 3:6, 14; 4:14; 6:11)
 - e. statements of John (1 John 2:6; 2 John 9; Rev. 2:7, 17, 20; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7)

Biblical salvation issues from the love, mercy, and grace of a sovereign Triune God. No human can be saved without the initiation of the Spirit. Deity comes first and sets the agenda, but demands that humans must respond in faith and repentance, both initially and continually. God works with mankind in a covenant relationship. There are privileges and responsibilities!

Salvation is offered to all humans. Jesus' death dealt with the sin problem of the fallen creation! God has provided a way and wants all those made in His image to respond to His love and provision in Jesus.¹

'Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this' (2 Tim. 2:7).

In effect Paul is saying: 'Take seriously what I am teaching you, Timothy, for it is not merely a human word, but as God's apostle I am bringing you the word of God.' It reminds us of the words Jesus often used when concluding his parables, 'He, who has ears to hear, let him hear.' We can be guilty of hearing God's Word preached, or read from the Scriptures, but without really reflecting on it so as to get insight into its meaning and application to our own lives.

Sad to say, there are Christians who never get down to any serious Bible study, but are content with the kind of devotional reading that never really stretches their minds. God never bypasses the mind and the mental struggle involved in getting to grips with the truth of his Word. Ministers especially should give themselves to in-depth study of God's Word, digging deeply into the text so as to gain insight into its meaning and message for the benefit of their people. At the same time, care should be taken not to make it simply an intellectual exercise, but to accompany it with prayer for the illumination which only the Holy Spirit can give.²

¹ Utley, R. J. (2000). *Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey: I Timothy, Titus, II Timothy* (Vol. Volume 9, p. 150). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.

² Williams, P. (2007). *Opening up 2 Timothy* (pp. 43–45). Leominster: Day One Publications.