

# THE DISCERNER



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“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.”

Ephesians 5:6-12 (NAS)

**PERSEVERANCE AND ASSURANCE**

THE DISCERNER

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# PERSEVERANCE AND ASSURANCE

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## Introduction

In this issue of The Discerner we will examine two elements pertaining to the eternal security of the Saints - Perseverance and Assurance.

### I. Perseverance of the Saints

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is the biblical doctrine which teaches that by virtue God's grace all Believers will continue in salvation and enter into the eternal rest of heaven.

- A. Five Biblical principles guaranteeing the perseverance of the Saints.
  1. God's Promise
  2. God's Provision
  3. God's Priest
  4. God's Purpose
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## II. Assurance of the Saints

The doctrine of the assurance of the saints is the biblical doctrine which teaches that all Believers can live confidently knowing that they are saved and will enter into the eternal rest of heaven.

- A. Five Biblical responses of the Saints of which assurance is a by-product.
  1. Saint's Allegiance
  2. Saint's Action
  3. Saint's Attention
  4. Saint's Aspiration
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For this study I have designed a table (below) to be used as a quick reference as well as an aid in remembering the points and verses relating to *perseverance* and *assurance*. God's work of regeneration guarantees the perseverance of the Saints. The five principles of perseverance relating to God's Work all begin with the letter "P." God's: Promise, Provision, Priest, Purpose, and Power. The Saint's Biblical response in the sanctification process yields assurance. The five Biblical responses of the Saint, of which assurance is an outgrowth, all begin with the letter "A." The Saint's: Allegiance, Action, Attention, Aspiration, and Acknowledgement. As indicated by an arrow (→) the table also depicts the correlation between the points of perseverance and those of sanctification. For example, the allegiance of the Saint is to the promise of God, which is His Word on the related subject. Likewise, the Saint's action should be in line with God's provision of the Holy Spirit to guide the Believer into and teach him or her the truth and so on with the remaining points. This relationship reveals that the perseverance of the Saints and the assurance of the Saints are two distinct doctrines, which are inseparably woven together. Because of this close correlation it is helpful to study the subject by first looking at the point of perseverance and then its coinciding complement. Stated in various ways in the study, it will be apparent that the Word of God and a life conforming to His Word form the true basis of assurance.

PERSEVERANCE AND ASSURANCE			
GOD'S WORK		SAINT'S RESPONSE	
<a href="#">Regeneration</a>		<a href="#">Sanctification</a>	
<a href="#">Perseverance</a>		<a href="#">Assurance</a>	
Titus 1:2; 1 John 2:25; 5:11-12	<a href="#">God's Promise</a>	→	<a href="#">Saint's Allegiance</a>   2 Timothy 2:15
Ephesians 1:13-14	<a href="#">God's Pledge</a>	→	<a href="#">Saint's Action</a>   Galatians 5:16
Hebrews 7:25	<a href="#">God's Priest</a>	→	<a href="#">Saint's Attention</a>   Hebrews 12:1-3
Romans 8:29-30	<a href="#">God's Purpose</a>	→	<a href="#">Saint's Aspiration</a>   2 Peter 1:1-11
1 Peter 1:5 Jude 1:24	<a href="#">God's Power</a>	→	<a href="#">Saint's Acknowledgement</a>   2 Timothy 1:12

## Section I

### The Perseverance of the Saints

It is a Biblical fact that absolutely all Believers will continue in salvation and will enter into the rest of heaven. This is the doctrine of the perseverance of the Saints. Sometimes the doctrine of the perseverance of the Saints is summed up by the phrase, "once saved always saved" or "once a child of God, always a child of God." Indeed these statements are true, for that is most definitely the distinct declaration of Scripture:

John 6:35-40

*Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall **not** hunger, and he who believes in Me shall **never** thirst. But I said to you, that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will **certainly not** cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have **eternal life**; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."*

In these six verses Jesus, at least 7 times, speaks of the doctrine of the perseverance of the Saints:

1. "...he who comes to Me shall not hunger..."
2. "...he who believes in Me shall never thirst."
3. "...one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."
4. "...of all that He has given Me I lose nothing..."
5. "...but raise it up on the last day."
6. "...everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life..."
7. "...I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

Not only do these words of our precious Lord illustrate the perseverance of the Saints, but they also reveal the very foundation of the doctrine of perseverance. That foundation being the **sovereign will** of God:

- "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me..."
- "And this is the will of Him who sent Me,"
- "that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. "
- "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life..."

Therefore, in accordance with His divine will it is by the virtue of the grace of God alone, that the Saints persevere, for it is by His grace alone that each Believer has been saved. Therefore, the **perseverance** of the Saints is continuous and unchanging.

God's exclusive work of regeneration guarantees the perseverance of the Saints. Regeneration is the work of God whereby He gives new life to an individual.<sup>1</sup> Those regenerated will persevere as demonstrated by five principles found in the Word of God: 1) God's Promise. 2) God's Provision. 3) God's Priest. 4) God's Purpose. 5) God's Power.

### God's Promise

I John 5:11-12

*And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. (NAS)*

To the believer, God has promised eternal life (Also see 1 John 2:25). As the word "eternal" indicates the type of life which God gives lasts

indefinitely. It is **eternal life!** God has not promised temporary life to Christians. Some argue that this life will only be received if the Believer fulfills his obligations to God's promise. In doing so they fail to understand two very important aspects of the eternal life that is promised to all who believe:

1. The condition that is given with this promise does not rest on the ability of the recipient. The condition, as clearly stated in the verse is that he or she "*has the Son.*" Eternal life is only in Jesus. It is not a subject of works but of possession. In particular, possession of Christ.
2. Eternal life is not something that the Believer hopes to achieve in the future. He or she actually possesses eternal life at the very moment the Son is possessed -- "*He who has the Son has the life.*" Also notice verse 11, "*God has given us eternal life...*" It does not say God will give us eternal life, but "*has given us eternal life.*"

Eternal life for the Believer is a present possession. Therefore, as the word *eternal* indicates the life that God gives is eternal. Because God has promised eternal life to the Believer and He cannot lie (Titus 1:2), the believer, by the very fact that he or she has **eternal life** will persevere.

### [God's Pledge](#)

Ephesians 1:13-14

*In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation -- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (NAS)*

In addition to the promise of God's Word is God's **provision**, the Holy Spirit of promise. The work of the Holy Spirit in the life of every Believer is extensive. Regarding perseverance, examine two aspects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit:

1. He is given as God's down payment or deposit in the Believer. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is God's pledge guaranteeing that the Believer will one day be in the immediate presence of God for eternity ("*who is given as a pledge of our inheritance,*

*with a view to the redemption of God's own possession"). Also see 2 Corinthians 5:5.*

2. The Holy Spirit guides the Believer into all the truth of God's Word (John 16:13). It is through the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to understand the great and precious promises of God, which He has given to us in His Word (1 Corinthians 2:9-16). It is upon the basis of the Word of God that the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:16). It is the children of God who are heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). Heirs to an inheritance that is reserved in heaven for Christians (1 Peter 1:3-4).

### God's Priest

Hebrews 7:24-25

*"...but He, on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."*

The high priesthood of Jesus guarantees that the Believer will persevere. Jesus lives forever to make intercession for Christians. To say that a Christian will not persevere is to slander the priesthood of Christ and the sovereign will of the Father, not the behavior of a Christian. Elsewhere, Jesus said that no one can come to the Father except through Himself (John 14:6). He also said that no one can come to Him (Jesus) except the Father draw him (John 6:44, 65). So we see that Jesus is the only way to the Father and that no one can come to Christ unless God draws him. Now examine John 6:37 where Jesus says, *"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and the one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out."* Jesus says He will certainly not cast out the one who comes to Him. In the very next verse Jesus states that He came to do His Father's will (John 6:38). He then went on to say what one aspect of the Father's will is as it pertains to the perseverance of the Believer:

John 6:39-40

*"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."* (NAS)



Regarding the will of the Father, Jesus informs us in these two verses that of all that have been given to Him by the Father, He will lose nothing, for it is the will of the Father that all who believe in Christ may have eternal life. On the last day Jesus will raise him up. In the meantime, according to Hebrews 7:24-25, Jesus, the High Priest, ever lives to intercede for the believer guaranteeing perseverance. Be aware that the verse (Hebrews 7:25) says, "*He [Jesus] is able to **save forever** those who draw near to God through Him.*" For how long does He save them? The Word of God says, *forever*. This obviously is in agreement with the eternal life that God gives to every Believer.

### God's Purpose

Romans 8:28-30

*"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. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined {to become} conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."*

Additional evidence demonstrating the perseverance of the Saints is found in God's purpose. The ultimate purpose for every Believer is to glorify God. This is accomplished as God transforms all Christians into the image of Jesus Christ. This transformation is a predetermined work of God, which He will accomplish in the lives of all who believe and are saved. Verse 30 of Romans 8 indicates that those who are predestined are *called, justified, and glorified*. The glorification of the Christian refers to that future time when he or she having been completely conformed to the image of Christ will be in the immediate presence of God (2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 3:2). The past tense of the verbs in this verse demonstrate the surety of the sovereign plan and purpose of God as Paul went on to indicate in verses 38-39:

*"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

There is nothing that can thwart the purpose of God (Job 42:1-2; Isaiah 55:11)!

## God's Power

1 Peter 1:3-5

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*

Finally, and obvious at this point, is the fact that the perseverance of the saints has as its ultimate basis the power of God. In Biblical salvation God not only reserves a place at the banquet table for the Believer, but by His power He also affirms the RSVP. Against His power no one or nothing can stand. Regarding the power of the Father and the Son as it pertains to their ability to hold the Believer consider the following words of Jesus:

John 10:27-30

*"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." These verses speak volumes about Jesus' sheep; What they do; What Christ gives to them; The result of that gift; Who it is that holds them;*

So then, the doctrine of the perseverance of the Saints is a doctrine that teaches that it is God Who has a hold on the Saints, versus the Saints having a hold on God.

Through the years it has unfortunately become common practice for more and more Evangelicals to view the false doctrine and erroneous belief of losing one's salvation as a nonessential or secondary element of what constitutes the Gospel. However, in the light of what we have examined and much more, the teaching and belief that says salvation can be lost should be considered heresy! For it is a direct assault against God Himself - His *promise, provision, priest, purpose, and power*. In every case this false doctrine of potentially losing salvation denies God's sovereignty, grace, the redemptive effect of Christ's atonement and then

exalts doctrines related to man's will, work, and falsely so called worth, each of which is denied by Scripture as they pertain to salvation (See John 1:12-13; Romans 9:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:9-20; 1 Timothy 1:15).

## Section II

### The Assurance of the Saints

It is a Biblical fact that the Saints can and indeed should live confidently, knowing that they are indeed secure (will persevere) in Christ. This aspect of the life of the Christian is referred to as the doctrine of **assurance**.

Unfortunately some have concluded that because of the sovereignty of God in salvation no one can really be sure of his or her salvation. However, they are wrong in their conclusion. The absolute sovereignty of God is actually the basis of one's assurance.

One of the clear aims of Scripture to convey to all Believers that they can and should have assurance of an eternity with God. Indicated by the words of Jesus in John 6:35-40 (above) is His intent for Believers to have assurance in the light of the **will** and **work** of the Father and the Son. Elsewhere, Jesus assured His disciples of eternity when He said:

*"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." John 10:27-29*

*"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." John 14:1-3 (NAS)*

## **Paul testified of the doctrine of assurance:**

*"For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Corinthians 5:1*

*"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Timothy 1:12 (KJV)*

## **Peter exhorted Believers to make certain about God's calling and choosing of them:**

*"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 Peter 1:10*

## **John wrote his first epistle so that Believers may know that they have eternal life:**

*"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." I John 5:13*

Although the **perseverance** of the Saints is continuous and unchanging, the **assurance** of the Saints is not. The reason for this is found in the fact that perseverance is a work of the grace of God alone, while assurance flows from the responsible walk of the Believer. Exhorting Believers to make certain about God's calling and choosing of them by adding specific virtues to their faith, Peter reminds us of our own responsibility in our walk (*sanctification process*) with God (2 Peter 1:4-10). Failure to possess and practice such things leads to forgetfulness (v. 9) and stumbling (v. 10), both of which demonstrate a lack of assurance. Therefore, because one aspect of assurance is a byproduct of one's own diligence it may vacillate.

Sanctification is that life long process wherein God, by His design allows the regenerated person to willfully cooperate with Him as He conforms the Believer to the image of Christ.<sup>2</sup> It is important to remember that because **sanctification** contains a human aspect of cooperation it will progress at different rates. However, because

sanctification also involves the indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-15) working in the regenerate person, and God's discipline on the Believer (Hebrews 12:5-13) it is progressive and can never be arrested (Philippians 1:6).

Pertaining to the Saint's Assurance, and in correlation with each of the five principles of God's Work are five principles that characterize the Saint's Response to God's Work. They are 1) The Saint's **Allegiance**. 2) Saint's **Action**. 3) Saint's **Attention**. 4) Saint's **Aspiration**. 5) Saint's **Acknowledgement**. Because these last five principles are related to the responsible response of the Christian they must be understood as aspects of the practical sanctification process.

### [Saint's Allegiance](#)

2 Timothy 2:15

*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (KJV)*

Under sanctification and correlating to **God's Promise** is the **Saint's Allegiance**. Allegiance describes a Believer's loyalty to God's Word. The necessity for the Believer to apply himself or herself to the study and understanding of the Word of God cannot be overstated! No one unfamiliar with the Word of God can justifiably claim assurance. Claiming assurance with no understanding of God's Word only reveals one's shame.

In this life many things contend for the Believer's allegiance: feelings, comfort, convenience, success, self, worldly wisdom, and on and on goes the list. All of these things fluctuate and at times even run contrary to God's Word. Using them as a basis for assurance of eternal life is to walk contrary to faith and can only lead to doubt and frustration. However, God's Word is true (John 17:17) and constant (Psalm 119:89). It is a reflection of God's own unchangeable nature (Malachi 3:6).

Because of its unchanging character the **Word of God alone** is the standard against which is measured the life and conduct of the believer. God's truth and conformity to it form the basis for assurance. Therefore the Bible deserves the believer's un-compromised allegiance. A divided allegiance is indicative of a divided heart and a failure to walk by faith. This divided allegiance results in the believer being tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine (See Ephesians 4:11-14). Even more than it resulting in trials in the life of a Christian, Jesus

characterizes divided allegiance as being evil. In Matthew 6:22 Jesus spoke of the necessity of having a single eye. In this reference the KJV translates the Greek word *haplous* as *single*, demonstrating the necessity of having a single treasure (v. 21), and serving only one master (v. 24). Other translations (NAS and NIV) bring out the moral character of the word by translating "haplous" *clear* and *good*, thus contrasting it with the evil in verse 23. A Christian who realizes a divided allegiance should repent seeking God's forgiveness. Then begin to take every thought, feeling, and any other situation which rises against the knowledge of God captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Then He or she can rest **assured** on the basis that God's Word declares that the only kind of life that God gives is **eternal life!**

### Saint's Action

Galatians 5:16

*"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."*

On the heels of the Saint's allegiance and in correlation with **God's Provision** is the **Saint's Action**. He or she is to walk in the Spirit. Having been given the Holy Spirit as a pledge of our inheritance we Christians are to walk in the Spirit. Here is where the Believer is seen as a doer of that truth in which the Holy Spirit guides him (John 16:33). To profess allegiance to the Word of God without doing the Word is a contradiction. Such a contradiction arrests Biblical assurance. No one, walking in disobedience to the truth, can justifiably claim assurance.

There is absolutely no Biblical basis for the existence of salvation apart from sanctification. This is the declaration of Scripture:

I John 2:4-5a

*"The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected."*

Only foolish reasoning believes assurance can be founded on a lie. Sadly, the easy-believism of our day has led many to believe just that. Those advocating easy-believism are under the false impression that the basis of assurance consists solely of a prayer that lasted but a few

seconds apart from a life that is being transformed. However, Biblical assurance is gleaned through time as one examines the evidence of being regenerated. The presence of the elements of the sanctification process in one's life as they are understood in the light of biblical truth form the evidence and testify to being truly regenerated (Compare Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23).

The doctrine of easy believism seems to allege a third alternative to Galatians 5:16, a kind of earthly purgatory where a person is neither walking by the Spirit nor fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. According to the Bible such a condition cannot be true. Just like after death a person is either in heaven or hell, a Believer in this life is either walking by the Spirit which is exemplified as he lives a life characterized by doing the Word, or he is fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. There is nothing in between! For this reason Ephesians 5:18 exhorts Believers to keep on being filled with the Spirit.

In addition to the easy believism approach, some have redefined walking by the Spirit as a form of mysticism. Under this definition the ministry of the Spirit is reduced to subjective feelings and/or so called supernatural experiences of various kinds.

It should be obvious that one who is walking by the Spirit is one whose life is characterized by the doing of the Word of God. Concerning the ministry of the Spirit, Jesus said to His disciples, "*He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.*" Also, "*But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth...*" (John 14:26; 16:13). Professing assurance on the basis of inward prompting, supernatural affirmations, and the like and then attributing these things to the Spirit effecting assurance, actually changes the ministry of the Holy Spirit into a ministry contrary to the words of Jesus when He spoke of the Spirit teaching and leading the believer into all the truth. Consequently, such esoteric encounters become the basis of one's assurance rather than the obvious evidence of a life of godliness as defined by Scripture. Romans 8:16 is often cited as a text supporting subjective experiences. However, there is no Scriptural basis for believing that Romans 8:16 refers to a mystical confirmation of being a child of God when one is walking contrary to the Word of God, for the context of Romans 8 militates against this very thing. See Romans 8, in particular verses 4-8, and 13.

Notice that by comparing the John 14:26 and John 16:13 we are able to see that the ministry of the Spirit is to teach and guide into all the truth. Now the truth that Christ was referring to was none other than His Word, which we know is the Word of God. While the apostles were moved by the Spirit to communicate God's Word, all Believers receive illumination enabling them to acknowledge and understand the truth (Matthew 13:23; 1Corinthians 2:6-16), and this leads to godliness (Titus 1:1).

Contrary to easy believism and mysticism, assurance is realized from a Spirit led life, a life that is characterized by a persistent perpetual walk of obedience to the revealed Word of God.<sup>3</sup> There are no substitutions. It was Jesus who best exemplified such a walk therefore it is toward Him that we must turn our attention.

### Saint's Attention

Hebrews 12:1-3

*"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart."*

Throughout the New Testament the Christian life is characterized as a battle. While the instruments of confrontation may vary (people -2 Timothy 4:14-15; places- Revelation 2:13; and things-Revelation 2:24) in essence the battle is spiritual (2 Corinthians 10:3-4; Ephesians 6:10-18). Living godly in Christ brings the Believer into direct confrontation with the world and its ruler, the devil (2 Timothy 3:12; 2 Peter 5:8). The reason for this is simple—the Believer is not of the world. He or she has received a divine command to come out from the world and be separate (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). This does not mean Believers are to leave the world, but that they are not to participate in the ungodly practices (Ephesians 5:11) or unholy principles of the world (Colossians 2:8). Nor does coming out from the world mean the Believer should not associate with the immoral people of the world (1 Corinthians 5:9-10). Obviously



then, being in the world (not of it) requires the Believer to participate in the natural but not sinful things of the world. It is inevitable, as one passes through the world trials of various kinds will be encountered. Now throw into this arena the Christian's own sinful flesh (Romans 7:18-25) and you have all the makings of an intense battle—a battle that is internal as well as external. A battle wherein the Christian is to seek to bring honor and glory to God (1Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17), knowing that it is God who is working all things after the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11).

As one might imagine, the potential for the saint to become weary and lose heart in such confrontation is very real. So what is the remedy? Hebrews 12 directs our **attention** to Jesus. As a runner in a race the Christian is to turn his attention from the distractions of the sideline and the discomforts of the conflict, and focus his attention on the goal. In the case of the believer the goal is Christ. In verse 3 of Hebrews 12 we are told to "consider Him [Jesus]." The believer considers Christ by examining what Scripture declares regarding Jesus. Obviously, this will require a continual study of the Bible for it alone is the divinely inspired testimony of Christ (John 5:39). Assurance comes as one sees his or her life conforming more and more to the life of the Lord Jesus (See 1 John 2:4-6). Which brings us to our next point—the Saint's aspiration.

### Saint's Aspiration

2 Peter 1:1-11

*"Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 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. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply **moral excellence**, and in your moral excellence, **knowledge**; and in your knowledge, **self-control**, and in your self-control, **perseverance**, and in your perseverance, **godliness**; and in your godliness, **brotherly kindness**, and in your brotherly kindness, **love**. For if these qualities*

*are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 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; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."*

As has already been pointed out, it is God's purpose to conform every Christian to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). Therefore, every Saint's aspiration should be conformity to the image of Christ. The Saint's aspiration is not merely wishful thinking. Having revealed Christ as our example (Hebrews 12:1-3) the Bible actually lists attributes that each Believer has the responsibility of pursuing on a practical level as he or she aspires to be conformed to the image of Christ (2 Peter 1:5-11). These attributes are themselves characteristics of the nature of God<sup>4</sup> and the presence of them in the life of an individual serves as an objective basis for assurance.

A person lacking these qualities cannot justifiably claim Biblical assurance of salvation for verse 9 of 2 Peter 1 says that such a person has forgotten his purification from his former sins. How can one truly have assurance about something when he has forgotten the very foundation upon which his assurance rests, the purification from his former sins. For this very reason verse 10 exhorts the Believer to be all the more diligent to make certain about God's calling and choosing of him. *Certainty* comes as the Believer sees the objective results of faith in his or her own life, a life conforming to godliness.

Doubt arises when the pursuits of one's life do not match his/her profession. Unchecked doubt then leads to negative feelings. Together these two elements (doubt and negative feelings) spread a net of deception leading the believer to think that his or her assurance rests on feelings. The Believer then begins to pursue experiences that will make him "feel" saved, when what is really needed is a change in thinking and behavior so as to comply with the practical objectives listed in 2 Peter and throughout God's Word. As Believers do this, their feelings will follow. Once the feelings begin to follow the Christian encounters the potential trap again, the ever-present inclination to substitute in the place of the objective Word of God, subjective feelings (however good they

may seem) as a basis for assurance. Obviously, such inclination must constantly be resisted. Instead, one must look to the promise of God's Word regarding salvation and in their life see the objective evidences of salvation in order to have assurance. Simply put—the Word of God and a life conforming to the image of Christ (as revealed in Scripture) form the basis of assurance.

### **Moral Excellence**

This pertains to consistent behavior that mirrors and testifies to God's own moral excellence (See 1:3 and 1Peter 2:9 where the same word describes God). Although a different word is used, 1 Peter 2:12 seems to illustrate the practical implications of moral excellence:

*"Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe {them,} glorify God in the day of visitation."*

### **Knowledge**

This is knowledge of God's truth in regard to His standard of what is right and good as opposed to fallen man's standard. It is within the parameter of God's Word that the behavior of the Believer is to function.

### **Self-control**

Obviously, discipline is required in order to resist the devil and prevent succumbing to the desires of the flesh. Self-control demonstrates the presence of wisdom and one's submission to God.

### **Perseverance**

The practical life of the Christian is to reflect the spiritual reality of the fact that the Christian will be preserved. A Christ centered life is not superficial pragmatic living. It requires a steadfast endurance as one weathers the trials of life, expectantly awaiting the coming of the Lord and the consummation of the ages, all the while knowing that God is working all things after the counsel of His will (Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11 See context of each).

### **Godliness**

Godliness addresses the Christian's devotion toward God. The Believer is concerned about what is pleasing to God. Consequently he seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Godliness reminds the Believer of the selflessness of following Christ (Luke 9:23-25).

### **Brotherly Kindness**

In the Greek the word is *philadelphia*. The Believer who is devoted to God does not ignore those born of God, but is kind and tenderhearted toward them. Having been born into a family the Christian should exhibit affection and care toward the members of that family. Also see 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 where Paul encouraged the Christian's of the church of the Thessalonians who were practicing love for the brethren to excel still more in this area.

## **Love**

In Christ Biblical love is divinely exemplified. It is through His example that we know what love is and how it is to be expressed. 1 John 3:16a expresses three elements of Biblical love which are exemplified in Christ.

1. Obedience “*He laid down His life...*” According to Philippians 2:8 laying down one's life is the ultimate demonstration of obedience.
2. Denial of self “*... His life for us...*”
3. Giving “*... His life for us...*”

Compare to these virtues listed by Peter: Romans 5:1-5; Ephesians 5:1-21; Philippians 3:1-21; Colossians 3:1-17; James 1:1-8.

## [Saint's Acknowledgement](#)

2 Timothy 1:12

*“For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.”*

Ultimately, assurance comes as the Saint acknowledges the **power of God** to guard that which has been entrusted to Him. Consider the following verses:

John 6:37

*“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.”*

John 6:39

*And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.*

John 6:44

*“No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”*

John 10:27-29

*“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.”*

Jude 1:24

*“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy...”*

Consider this Christian that it is God who has reserved your inheritance on your behalf and He makes no mistakes!

1 Peter 1:3-5

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*

What God has started He also completes. For Him there is no unfinished or faulty business.

Philippians 1:6

*“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

Romans 8:28-39

*“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. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He*

*also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 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. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

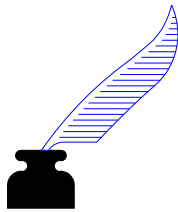
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<sup>1</sup> Scripture refers to the new life of regeneration in various ways -- "born again," "raised up," "new creature," "made alive," "heart of flesh" as opposed to a "heart of stone," "created in Christ Jesus" etc., (Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26; John 3:3,7; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:5,6,10).

<sup>2</sup> Sanctification is not for salvation, but from salvation. It is the natural and necessary result of regeneration (Ephesians 2:8-10). Scripture refers to sanctification when it speaks of the Christian working out his or her salvation, growing in Christ, walking in good works, standing fast, being diligent, running the race, putting aside every weight, etc., (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 15:58; Philippians 2:12; 3:13-14; Hebrews 6:10-11; 12:1-3; 2 Peter 1:5-10; 3:18).

<sup>3</sup> Certainly there are subjective elements in the life every believer (Psalm 37:4). However, such elements do not form the foundation of the Church (Ephesians 2:19-20). Neither should they form foundations in the lives of individual Believers (Proverbs 3:5-6; 19:2; Matthew 7:24-27).

<sup>4</sup> The context of 1 Peter 1 is not talking about becoming God or gods as some foolishly teach. Neither is it talking about stages or phases in the Christian life. Each attribute is to be present in the life of every believer. In short, these verses speak of reflecting the character of God's righteousness in our own lives. This has also been referred to as the practical righteousness of the saints.



The Discerner reflects the heart desire of this pastor for God's people to know and understand God as He has revealed Himself through the Scripture. Jeremiah 9:23-24

*David Martin*

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