

REDEMPTION ACCOMPLISHED & APPLIED
Sandy Springs OPC adult Sunday school class • May 4, 2025

LAST LESSON: Sanctification

Sanctification is a change of character in which the Spirit applies the death and resurrection of Christ to us. At conversion we're "definitively sanctified": consecrated, alive to God, dead to sin and free from its dominion. This definitive sense is meant when the Bible says we're already sanctified—saints, who don't "go on sinning." "Sanctification" in the common, confessional sense means progressively growing into this new, holy identity. We must work to kill sin and cultivate godliness, but we use God's means and need God's strength to succeed. Unlike justification, sanctification varies from time to time and person to person, and isn't perfect in this life.

Errors to avoid concerning sanctification

- A. confusing it with justification (the fundamental error of Roman Catholicism)
- B. perfectionism or "entire sanctification" (see 1 John 1:8; Philippians 3:12-14; cf. Romans 7:14-25)
- C. split personalities (see 2 Corinthians 5:17) or self-compartmentalization (no "spirit versus soul")
- D. passivity (we don't "let go and let God") or complacency (there are no "carnal Christians")

THIS LESSON: Perseverance

I. The concept of perseverance

- A. Larger Catechism 79

True believers, by reason of the unchangeable love of God, and his decree and covenant to give them perseverance, their inseparable union with Christ, his continual intercession for them, and the Spirit and seed of God abiding in them, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

- B. perseverance isn't really a step within the *ordo salutis* but rather a description of it
- C. perseverance is our action, but one that God causes, sustains, guarantees (cf. 1 Peter 1:4-5)
- D. we're saved through persevering (Matthew 10:22; James 1:12)—
not regardless of whether we persevere
 - 1. only actual "saints" are certain to "persevere" (John 8:31; Hebrews 3:14)
 - 2. beware of true but misleading phrases (security of the believer, once saved always saved)

II. The truth of saints' perseverance

- A. biblical assurances (John 10:28-30; Philippians 1:6; 1 Corinthians 1:8-9; Romans 8:35-39)
- B. God's covenant commitments (Jeremiah 32:40; Isaiah 54:10; 59:21; Hebrews 13:20-21)
- C. salvation is a "golden chain" that cannot be broken (Romans 8:30)
- D. election, regeneration, justification, and adoption are each permanent by definition
- E. the change begun in us is permanent too (1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 3:9; 5:18)

III. The causes of perseverance

- A. Father's electing love (Jeremiah 31:3), will (John 6:39-40), and providential care (Isaiah 43:5-7)
- B. Son's finished work (Hebrews 10:14) and ongoing intercession (Hebrews 7:25; Luke 22:31-32)
- C. Spirit's sealing for eternity (Ephesians 1:13-14) and indwelling (Romans 8:11; John 14:16-17)

IV. The means of perseverance

- A. the means of grace: word, sacraments, and prayer (cf. Canons of Dordt 5.14)
- B. the church: worship, fellowship, and shepherding (including church discipline)

V. Denials of perseverance

- A. consistent Arminians have denied it since the 1600s, in service of Enlightenment “free will”
 - but some don’t seek consistency, realizing that denial is unbiblical and hard to live with
- B. “many Christians leave the faith”
 - but some return, even after serious backsliding (biblical examples: David, Jonah, Peter)
 - but some were never really believers (1 John 2:19; cf. Matthew 7:21-23, Parable of Sower)
- C. “the Bible describes people falling away” (e.g.: Galatians 5:4; 2 Peter 2:1, 20-22)
 - but these passages are really about defecting from gospel *doctrine*, or *outward privileges*
- D. “the Bible warns us against apostasy” (e.g.: John 15:1-2, 6; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-29)
 - but these are among the very means God uses to preserve us who have ears to hear them
 - but such passages expose presumption and self-deception, and explain the fall of others
- E. “guaranteeing perseverance will make people careless”
 - but denials make people self-reliant, anxious, or eager for reconversion not growth
 - but true believers are also transformed believers
 - but it’s possible to respond rightly to grace, rather than abusing it (Canons of Dordt 5.12)

VI. Applications of perseverance

- A. humble exertion, instead of laziness or presumption (Philippians 3:12-14; Hebrews 6:11-12)
- B. steady communion with Christ, instead of seeking new conversion or drama (John 15:4, 10)
- C. regular use of the means of grace in the fellowship of God’s people (Hebrews 10:23-25)
- D. peace of mind and grateful praise

Here I raise my Ebenezer, hither by thy help I’m come;

and I hope, by thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home...

O to grace how great a debtor daily I’m constrained to be;

let that grace now, like a fetter, bind my wand’ring heart to thee.

NEXT WEEK: Union with Christ (please read *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* II.9 and WLC 66)

Larger Catechism 66: What is that union which the elect have with Christ?

The union which the elect have with Christ is the work of God’s grace, whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably, joined to Christ as their head and husband; which is done in their effectual calling.

The Canons of the Synod of Dordt, 1619

Fifth Head of Doctrine

Article 1

Those whom God, according to His purpose, calls to the communion of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, He also delivers from the dominion and slavery of sin, though in this life He does not deliver them altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh.

Article 2

Hence spring forth the daily sins of infirmity, and blemishes cleave even to the best works of the saints. These are to them a perpetual reason to humiliate themselves before God and to flee for refuge to Christ crucified; to mortify the flesh more and more by the spirit of prayer and by holy exercises of piety; and to press forward to the goal of perfection, until at length, delivered from this body of death, they shall reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

Article 3

By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and also because of the temptations of the world and of Satan, those who are converted could not persevere in that grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who, having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end.

Article 4

Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God, who confirms and preserves true believers in a state of grace, yet converts are not always so influenced and actuated by the Spirit of God as not in some particular instances sinfully to deviate from the guidance of divine grace, so as to be seduced by and to comply with the lusts of the flesh; they must, therefore, be constant in watching and prayer, that they may not be led into temptation. When these are neglected, they are not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous sins by the flesh, the world, and Satan, but sometimes by the righteous permission of God actually are drawn into these evils. This, the lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints described in Holy Scripture, demonstrates.

Article 5

By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes for a while lose the sense of God's favor, until, when they change their course by serious repentance, the light of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them.

Article 6

But God, who is rich in mercy, according to His unchangeable purpose of election, does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from His own people even in their grievous falls; nor suffers them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption and forfeit the state of justification, or to commit the sin unto death or against the Holy Spirit; nor does He permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.

Article 7

For in the first place, in these falls He preserves in them the incorruptible seed of regeneration from perishing or being totally lost; and again, by His Word and Spirit He certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, to a sincere and godly sorrow for their sins, that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator, may again experience the favor of a reconciled God, through faith adore His mercies, and henceforward more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

Article 8

Thus it is not in consequence of their own merits or strength, but of God's free mercy, that they neither totally fall from faith and grace nor continue and perish finally in their backslidings; which, with respect to themselves is not only possible, but would undoubtedly happen; but with respect to God, it is utterly impossible, since His counsel cannot be changed nor His promise

fail; neither can the call according to His purpose be revoked, nor the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ be rendered ineffectual, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit be frustrated or obliterated.

Article 9

Of this preservation of the elect to salvation and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they surely believe that they are and ever will continue true and living members of the Church, and that they have the forgiveness of sins and life eternal.

Article 10

This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to or independent of the Word of God, but springs from faith in God's promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit that we are children and heirs of God (Rom. 8:16); and lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort that they shall finally obtain the victory, and of this infallible pledge of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable.

Article 11

The Scripture moreover testifies that believers in this life have to struggle with various carnal doubts, and that under grievous temptations they do not always feel this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, who is the Father of all consolation, does not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that they may be able to endure it (1 Cor. 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit again inspires them with the comfortable assurance of persevering.

Article 12

This certainty of perseverance, however, is so far from exciting in believers a spirit of pride, or of rendering them carnally secure, that on the contrary it is the real source of humility, filial reverence, true piety, patience in every tribulation, fervent prayers, constancy in suffering and in confessing the truth, and of solid rejoicing in God; so that the consideration of this benefit should serve as an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works, as appears from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

Article 13

Neither does renewed confidence of persevering produce licentiousness or a disregard of piety in those who are recovered from backsliding; but it renders them much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, which He has ordained, that they who walk therein may keep the assurance of persevering; lest, on account of their abuse of His fatherly kindness, God should turn away His gracious countenance from them (to behold which is to the godly dearer than life, and the withdrawal of which is more bitter than death) and they in consequence thereof should fall into more grievous torments of conscience.

Article 14

And as it has pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, and by the use of the sacraments.

Article 15

The carnal mind is unable to comprehend this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and the certainty thereof, which God has most abundantly revealed in His Word, for the glory of His Name and the consolation of pious souls, and which He impresses upon the hearts of the believers. Satan abhors it, the world ridicules it, the ignorant and hypocritical abuse it, and the heretics oppose it. But the bride of Christ has always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it as an inestimable treasure; and God, against whom neither counsel nor strength can prevail, will dispose her so to continue to the end. Now to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

1 John 1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Isaiah 43:5-7 Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

Isaiah 54:10 For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

Isaiah 59:21 "And as for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD: "My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring," says the LORD, "from this time forth and forevermore."

Jeremiah 31:3 ...I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

Jeremiah 32:40 I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Matthew 10:22 ...the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Luke 22:31-32 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

John 6:39-40 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

John 8:31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples"

John 10:28-30 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will 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."

John 14:16-17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

John 15:1-2 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

John 15:6 If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

Romans 8:11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8:30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Romans 8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:8-9 [He] will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Galatians 5:4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.

Ephesians 1:13-14 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Philippians 1:6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 3:14 For we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

Hebrews 6:4-6 For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they then fall away, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

Hebrews 6:11-12 And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Hebrews 7:25 Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 10:14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Hebrews 10:23-25 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:26-29 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?

Hebrews 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

1 Peter 1:4-5 ...an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 1:23 ...you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God

1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

1 John 3:9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

1 John 5:18 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.