

Faithful to the Word of God – An Overview of Systematic Theology

A Video Series by Dr, R.C Sproul

Introduction to Session 38, “Perseverance of the Saints”

Part 9 in a study of Soteriology, the study of the doctrine of Salvation

Review

- Soteriology: Soter from the Greek “sozo” (to save) or “soter” (Savior)
- Reformed theology is any system of belief that traces its roots back to the Protestant Reformation, which proponents believe was the restoration of true Biblical Christianity. Reformed theology holds to the authority of scripture, the sovereignty of God, salvation by grace, and the necessity of evangelism.
- Understanding the nature of the gospel and salvation was the primary issue that brought about the reformation, and even within evangelicalism it continues to be an issue today
- Parts 1 – 8: Common Grace; Election & Reprobation; Effectual Calling; Justification by Faith Alone; Saving Faith; Adoption & Union with Christ; Sanctification

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- The doctrine of perseverance addresses the question, “Can a Christian lose their salvation?”
 - The Reformed position: “If you have it, you can never lose it. If you lose it, you never had it.” (1 Jn 2:19)
 - It is easy for people to become converted to institutions and miss a genuine conversion to Christ (Mk 4:2-9)
- The Reformer’s position was in contrast with Roman Catholicism, growing out of their convictions regarding the Sovereignty of God in salvation
 - Yet the view that salvation can be lost persists, even in evangelical churches
- But does the Bible support the Reformed view? Some hear a mixed message from scripture
 - On one hand, the Apostle Paul expresses confidence that what Christ has started He will finish (Phil 1:3-6; Eph 2:8-10)
 - But at first glance passages like Hebrews 6:1-6 seem to teach that people can and do lose their salvation, since it is clearly describing genuine believers

- But this passage is instead an argument against the Judaizers, proving that their position is incompatible with the Gospel
- This is made clear by the author's concluding remarks in verse 9: *"Though we speak in this way, yet in your case we feel sure of better things – things that belong to salvation."*
- The scene in the Upper Room and the events that follow speak powerfully to the doctrine of perseverance. Can a genuine Christian have a full and final fall?
 - Judas betrayed Christ and afterward committed suicide. The scripture testifies that he was a devil from the beginning (John 6:70-71)
 - Peter denied Jesus 3 times, as Jesus prophesied. Yet Jesus also promised Divine restoration (Luke 22:31-34)
 - This same Divine intervention is promised to all believers in Jesus' prayer, so that our confidence is in God's power and not our own (John 17:20)