The Lord Will Preserve You

Let us turn to our Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 4. 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 18, I'm backing up a little bit here. I go through a series of verses that are related to each other, and then I typically stop and drill into a few verses, into a few themes that are, I think, edifying, I hope. And so I'm doing that here in verse 18.

2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 18, let us listen attentively to the Word of God. And the Lord will preserve, or excuse me, and the Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever.

Amen. Let us pray. Herein God, Paul, reminds Timothy that God is in control, and that Jesus Christ will preserve him to the uttermost when his heavenly kingdom shall come in fullness and glory at the second coming.

Father, Lord, may we see this as a true doctrine, as a true teaching, not just for Paul as though he were special and unique, and he gets all the promises, and we just get second best, God Almighty, but rather all of us are saints, and all of us have the same promise, that you will preserve us for your heavenly kingdom. May we learn this or relearn it again, and be encouraged and strengthened thereby, God, that our hearts would not be downcast, but rather strengthened to know that you are for us in spite of how weak and limited we are with our faith and obedience. May this, Lord, be true for all of us, I pray.

Amen. Often Paul offers great spiritual depth and high hopes in a short amount of space. He's a dense writer.

Without a complete treatise, of course, explaining a teaching, the apostle nevertheless presents us with encouraging words often, even when they are written to explain, like in this case, his own situation. Ending his discussion with the young pastor Timothy, here in the second book, Paul warns him about enemies in the prior verses, such as the ones who came after the apostle himself, Alexander the coppersmith, verse 14. Yet Paul has not lost hope, trusting the Lord to deliver him and to preserve him unto heaven, or preserve me for his heavenly kingdom.

And if that's true for the apostles, as I said in our prayer, it is true for us as well, for the grace is the same for all of us in the kingdom of Christ. The first will be last, the last will be first. In that parable, we went over that Wednesday night, and one of the lessons you learn is, from that phrase, the proverbial way of speaking, the first is last, the last is first, is not Christ saying, well, there are no pastors, and I'm not your master, and we're all equal.

It wasn't socialism he was arguing for. The parable clearly describes that everyone gets the same, no matter how much work you do in the kingdom of God, early in the afternoon, early in the morning, late in the day, they all got one denarii, they all got the same grace, and we get the same grace the apostle does. So no matter your position in the church, you're just as saved as the next believer, and we have the same hope.

And it's encouraging to know that these great promises here, he will preserve me, Paul writes to Timothy, probably to encourage him, look, I'm going through this difficulty with,

you know, Alexander the coppersmith, my implication, others as well, but don't lose hope, don't worry, God is in control, He will preserve me, the implication, of course, He will preserve all His people.

The Lord Will Preserve His Own

So the first point is that the Lord will preserve His own, so I'm taking this in two parts, the Lord will preserve His own, in general, that is all His people, all His elect, and the second part would be the specifics of how He takes care of His own people, and you in particular. So here in general, His people are eternally saved, His people are eternally saved, God's elect will never fall away, is another way of describing this.

We have this summarized in the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 17, they whom God has accepted in His beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved. There are three paragraphs in chapter 17 here on the perseverance of the saints, the perseverance of the saints. Then you have the preservation of God upon His people, you have these two words that are very similar to saints.

Perseverance of the saints, as we're going to learn through these Bible verses, I was just using the confession as a short summary of a cover. Perseverance of the saints, to keep on keeping on, depends upon the preservation of God Almighty, that He preserves us in our perseverance. Yes, you're called to believe, you're called to repent, you're called to obey, right? God doesn't repent for you, God doesn't believe for you, you do this by the power of the Spirit, to be sure, it's a gift of God, yes, this is true.

You're called to love and to stand for Christ, we saw that this morning, faith in Christ and love to the saints. But you know, and I know, and you've seen it, and I've seen it sometimes, you know your heart more than I do, you fail. Your faith is weak, your obedience is half-hearted sometimes, and so just reading these passages in the Bible about our duties, and we have them, and there's plenty of them, is nevertheless only half the picture.

The other half is God in Christ preserving us, watching over us, protecting and delivering us. Philippians 1.6, one of these passages, Philippians 1.6, being confident, Paul writes, of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. He is confident that God is working in His people.

He who has, that is God in Christ, has begun a good work in you, in you fellow saints, not just the Apostle Paul or anybody else, and He will complete it. It's going to happen. The implication, of course, being it's a promise, and He believes in the promise, and He relies upon the promise, and He uses it as encouraging words to His audience here in that letter.

We see our incompleteness and our sanctification, our holiness is falling short, does fall short. We see our shortcomings, and yet Jesus is not finished with us yet. He will begin a good work in you and will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

It's an ongoing process, not justification. That's a forensic public declaration that happens once, and it's always the same and never changes. Sanctification, however, ebbs and flows.

It is subjective in the sense of you see it in our lives, and we're disobedient, and sometimes we're relatively more obedient than others, and our faith is strong and our faith is weak. That changes. Yes, there are degrees of sanctification.

There are not degrees of justification. John 10.28, we have another verse speaking of God preserving His people that His elect will not fall away. John 10.28, this is Jesus Christ, and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone 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 My Father's hand. Now, I think the first thing I want to point out before I point out the obvious thing, which is perseverance, that God will preserve us in spite of our not persevering sometimes. We fall short.

Nevertheless, Christ has us, the Father has us, and we see here that Christ is equal to the Father. I mean, I, Christ, give them eternal life. I thought God gave eternal life.

No, it's Jesus as well. He is God in the flesh, and they are in My hands. They can't snatch them out of My hands.

They can't snatch them out of My Father's hand. So, here clearly is a text of the deity of Jesus Christ, the second member of the blessed trinity. But the point here, of course, is that we are held in His hands.

We don't hold ourselves up at all. There's a sculpture of a man chiseling himself out of stone, right? You're a self-made man is the imagery. That's the American way, right? Out here out west, we're a bunch of cowboys.

We have a cowboy history where you make your own life, you make your own self, you're a self-made man. That's what really puts independency out here. And when it comes to a number of things in life, that's not necessarily wrong.

It's good to be independent to degrees in certain things, not foolishly, of course. But when it comes to the saving of the soul, you can't be independent enough. You're never going to be independent.

You're utterly, completely dependent upon God Almighty and in Christ. We read here by Jesus' own words, a promise. Not that, how much can you obey Me? How much can you sustain and protect yourself from the wiles of the devil? He's much smarter than us.

No, rather, it's an encouragement. I give you eternal life, and I'm holding you in My hand. And the Father is holding you in His hands.

And no one, no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hands. Next, we have 1 Peter 1.5. In 1 Peter 1.5, he writes, you who are kept by the power of God through faith for

salvation, ready to be revealed in the last day. And so in 1 Peter here, he reminds them that God is, of course, with them in preserving and protecting them, which is something you're finding out here in these different verses of different parts of the Bible.

Christians need to hear the encouragement in this. But what we see here in particular is, you who are kept by what? The power of God through faith for salvation. Right? Through faith.

You believe, you have to keep on believing, that is, trusting in God. But behind that trust is the power of God. You know you believe because God is working through you.

Your faith is weak. Have you not sinned this week? Of course, you have. But God's power is greater.

And that's what he looks to. He says, you are kept by the power of God through, yes, a weak faith, a faltering faith, a faith that falls apart at times, but God preserves it in you unto heaven when salvation shall be revealed at the last time when Christ Jesus returns. And so this text already gives us an idea of how God preserves His people.

He doesn't push us against our will. There's not miracles coming down left and right in heaven above upon the earth, but rather He preserves us through our perseverance, through our faith and trust in Him and Him alone. The Lord God works in and through our perseverance and, in fact, grants us the gift of perseverance.

And it's perseverance to the end. 2 Peter 1.10, Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never stumble.

So Peter urges them to what? Persevere to make their calling and election sure, not stop. Don't halt to ever move forward and to trust and to rely and to obey and to follow. And all the verses I just read up to this point explains that, yes, Peter is urging them to do something, but behind that urging, as Peter says in his other epistle, it is the power of God working in and through you.

And that's all the difference in the world. You're not alone. You're never alone if you're His.

Now, God working in and through your faith, in fact, faith is a gift of God, Ephesians 2.8. Now, we have four reasons, nevertheless, why you will never fall away in particular. So this is general. These passages just talk about not falling away or the power of God preserving and protecting you.

The Lord Will Preserve You

You're in the palm of God's hands and Christ's hands. And so the second main point, the Lord will preserve you in particular in a four-specific way. So from the general to the particular is how I'm moving here.

The first description here in general is the details of the preservation in your perseverance. I have to keep saying that very carefully, preservation in your perseverance. First part, of course, supported by the general proposition, the elect will never fall away from salvation.

I think we've established that by just some of those verses. And there's many other verses and other ways of arguing as well. And now these particular detailed ways are for, one, by the immutable decree of election, two, by the person and work of Jesus Christ, three, by the abiding power of the Holy Spirit, and four, by the promises of the covenant of grace.

Any one of those is sufficient. And yet we have all four, brothers and sisters. We have all four, a quadruple binding of grace and mercy wrapping our hearts and our souls.

These are infallible proofs that He will never leave you nor forsake you, brothers and sisters. So listen carefully. We are back into a simple summary here.

I will read and go through the verses from here. Again, chapter 17 of the confession on the perseverance of the saints, and yet all the texts we've gone through is what? The preservation of the saints. I need to retitle the topic there.

They're tied together, obviously. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, and then the rest of the points as well, the other three points. Depends upon the immutability of the decree of election.

Let's go back here. Depends not upon their own free will. Free will is one of the main gods of America and in the West, it seems.

If I don't have my free will, I don't want my religion. I don't want your religion. If you have your free will, what you're going to get is what we're seeing now.

A nosedive of Western civilization. This is your free will. Left to its own devices, it destroys everything around it because they're born in sin and depravity.

That's the free will. It's freely bound to Satan and sin, or it should be bound to God and Christ. Those are the only two options.

But upon the immutability, the perseverance, your perseverance is based upon and depends upon the immutability, the unchangeableness of the decree of election flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father. Before I go to the verses, I'll remind us again how much of this hangs off of one's theology, properly speaking. Theology being what? The study of God.

Theos, an ology of study. We have biology and all the other ologies. Zoology.

Theology, the study of God. What kind of a God do we have? What kind of a God do we believe in? What kind of a God is described here in the Bible? But an immutable God, a God who does not change. I am not like man, that I change my mind.

If that's not our God, then everything else falls apart, I argue. Well, based upon that, we have other texts here. 2 Timothy 2, 18 through 19.

2 Timothy 2, so a few chapters earlier here, verses 18 through 19. Nevertheless, this solid foundation of God stands. Having this seal, the Lord knows those who are His.

So he urges Timothy there that there's a solid foundation of God that stands, it does not waver. It is more firm than anything we can imagine or design. We have, you know, special designs, they do this in Japan and elsewhere for earthquakes so the buildings can survive.

But they still have a limit. You get that earthquake high enough, 8, 9, 10 on the Richter scale, doesn't matter how good of a design you have, it will fall apart. God, His salvation, God in His mercy, God in His promises, His foundation never shakes.

Nothing can shake it. And He has this seal, and the Lord knows who are His. It means none of those of His falls away.

It's not just that God, this has an interesting intellectual knowledge. His knowledge is tied to His power. All His attributes describe all these other attributes.

That's the simplicity of God. You can't break them up the way we think of in our own minds with respect to ourselves. Jeremiah 31.3, there's another text for us here.

Jeremiah 31.3, the Lord has appeared of old to me saying, yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore, with loving kindness, I have drawn you. That's pretty straightforward.

Everlasting love of God is given to His people. If it's everlasting, that means it does not change. It's not a fickle love.

It's not the kind of love that mankind has. And I know the best of us still have weak love in our Christian marriages because we are still sinners. But God is nothing like that.

He doesn't come and go like ours comes and goes. To any and all who trust and follow Jesus Christ and Him alone and put their faith and all their faith in Him, this promise is for them. He has loved you with an everlasting love.

Is that not sufficient? That is the first point that the immutability of the decree of election from eternity past that God has decided it, it's a solid foundation, it will come to pass. No question. The second basis for the preservation of the saints by the person and work of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, what He has done for us, not only what has been decreed in eternity past, but as it's executed in time and space here in the person and work of Christ, the second member of the Trinity, we have Hebrews 10.

In fact, there's a lot of texts that they use through the book of Hebrews, a lot of verses there in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews 10, 10 and 14, by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. We don't need any other sacrifices.

Christ did it once for all. He doesn't keep dying. He died once and He died for all, once for all, for all His people, and He died once for all with respect to time and efficacy.

It will happen. It is done. It is finished as He said on the cross.

And it continues in verse 14, for by one offering, that is Jesus, He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. You have been perfected, set aside, indeed justified and declared righteous in the law courts of heaven above by Jesus and His perfection for us and that received by faith and faith alone, but also are being sanctified. Both are true.

You're justified and sanctified if you trust in Christ. In justification, it is by faith and faith alone. In sanctification, it is by faith, as we heard this morning, working through love, Galatians 6, 5, 6, 6, 2. And here in Hebrews 10, it's Christ's work is sufficient to save us is the point.

The book of Hebrews is written to explain once and for all to a lot of the Jews that are still struggling at that time because the church was primarily Jewish, weren't they? All the converts in the opening chapters of Acts there with Peter and the like were Jews. He had thousands of Jews, 5,000 Jews, 8,000 Jews, lots and lots of Jews. And they're used to hundreds of years, 1,200 years, Moses about 1,250 or so of following a certain way of worshiping God.

So the Lord worked it so that He put this book together, the book of Hebrews to explain, look, Christ has come and it is finished. We don't have to go back to the old sacrificial system, the old ceremonial laws are all done away with. You don't need to regurgitate them and use them ever again, but rather it's Jesus.

He has fulfilled it all. And He goes through all these ways of arguing this. And this is one of them.

What He did, what was symbolized in the sacrificial system of the killing of the offerings on the altar was Jesus who Himself would die for His people in their stead. He is the Lamb. He is the altar.

He is the priest. He is the temple. Everything pointed to something that He did or His person and His characteristic and certainly His work.

And Jesus did not fail on the cross. It wasn't a wish on His part that somehow my people would be saved one way or the other, I'm not sure how. Rather for one offering, by one offering, He has perfected forever.

It is done and will be finished and those who are being sanctified. Hebrews 13 is the next text honing in on the person and work of Jesus. It has one of the four grounds or specifics of how the certainty that you will be preserved by God Almighty.

Hebrews 13, 20-21. Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great shepherd of sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make

you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

You may recall this verse because I read this specific verse as a benediction or a prayer because it is a prayer. It is, now may the God of peace while He's praying to God and He's praying something from God for us. And so I read it as a benediction at the end of the Lord's Supper.

If you read it carefully, you see it's a prayer for you that you will be complete in every good work to do His will. This prayer to God is a reminder that it's through Jesus Christ and His work for us. His work in you and completing in you and that through Jesus Christ, as it says here, make you complete, verse 21, and every good work to do His will, working in you, it is God working in you, what is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.

It is by the person and work of Christ that we persevere because God preserves us through His work. That's what we're reading there in Hebrews. And then in Romans 8, 33, many of us know this one.

It's a larger section here. I'm only going to read part of it. Who is He who condemns? It is Christ who died and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession 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? So I threw a series of rhetorical questions. He knows the answer. None of these things will separate us, will keep us in hell, but rather we will be in heaven with Jesus Christ.

And so Paul drills down into this list of obstacles that may even intimidate us. He even mentions famine and distress and tribulation, nakedness and sword, and even death itself shall not stand against us because we have Christ who intercedes for us, verse 34, and nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. And we have lastly here, Jesus' own prayer for us.

Jesus' own prayer for us. In Luke 22, 32 we read, but I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail. And when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren.

Now we certainly are called to pray for one another, but we pray for one another not on the basis of our own merits and our own power, but because of Christ and obedience to His Word. We pray that God would work in your lives and He may or may not answer according to our prayers. Do you think that's the case for Jesus Christ, the Son of God? God may or may not answer His prayers.

He answers His Son's prayers always. And when Jesus says, I pray for your faith, that your faith should not fail, it will not fail. Jesus said it, I believe it.

This is the perseverance of the saints by the preservation through Jesus Christ's prayer for us. Next we have the abiding power of the Spirit. So this is the third specific or ground, the

infallible ground upon which we are preserved unto heaven and the elect shall never fall away.

John 14, 16, so again we have Christ, and I will pray the Father. So and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

Jesus, our Mediator, again prays again for us time and time again, in this case for a Helper, an Advocate sometimes it's translated as. And that's what believers have, we have the Holy Spirit because Christ has given it to us. It's not only the Father who arranges our salvation from eternity past, that election that's immutable, not only the Son who accomplishes that redemption in time and space 2,000 years ago with His life and death and resurrection, but also the Spirit who applies it, as we saw there in Ephesians in the morning, 1,14, upon our lives and lives and dwells within us and is the Holy Spirit of the seal of promise of the inheritance that is ours.

The Spirit of truth we read here in John 14, 17, of whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. And so the world is without hope and thus they mock or ignore Christianity because they have not the Spirit and cannot receive it unless they are born again. It is not only the eternal electing of His people that's a sufficient ground.

If that were the only thing we had, the everlasting love of God, that is enough. But also the work of Jesus Christ and His intercession for us, He continues to pray for us. And this prayer includes the Spirit.

And we have the Spirit if we are His. We are indwelt by Him and He preserves us and He is our seal upon us as we believe. And lastly then, we also have the promises of the Messiah.

And one of those promises was the giving of the Spirit. And these promises are given to us in the form of a covenant where God comes down to our level and makes an agreement with us in Christ Jesus to all who repent and believe that they shall be saved. It's simple, it's to the point, and it's the hardest thing in the world to do.

And we know this because the churches are often empty. Jeremiah 32.40, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, we read, and I will not turn away from doing them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts so they will not depart from Me. Again, like many of the other verses, there's a lot to unpack here.

God's Word is sufficient. He said it, and it's good enough for us. I will put my fear in their hearts so they will not depart from Me.

He gives us what we need to persevere. And one of those, of course, is the fear, godly fear of the Lord. And that's not just an Old Testament thing as we know.

It's mentioned there several times in the New Testament as well, the fear of the Lord. And of course, the great proverb there, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That hasn't changed because God hasn't changed.

It's the same truth in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament. And it is an instrument or a tool of the Spirit of God within us to help us persevere. We are preserved by these promises, by the promise of the covenant of God Almighty who will put the fear in our hearts.

He also gave us, of course, regeneration. He also gave us the gift of repentance and the gift of faith. This too is from Him and not from our own free will.

And all the more, therefore, we praise and glorify Him. So, yes, we persevere. That chapter is about perseverance, chapter 17 of the Confession.

But everything we've read is how God Almighty Himself is involved in our perseverance. He preserves us even in spite of our stumbling. There's that written as well.

I haven't gone through that. There's a good explanation. Yes, believers will stumble.

They will fall. One of the greatest examples as we know, greatest in the sense it's sad to be sure, but it's most lively and true to us is David. He fell.

What kind of perseverance is David going on here? That's terrible. Peter. Peter denied Jesus Christ.

If that's not a lack of perseverance, I don't know what is. And yet the Lord restored him nevertheless, brothers and sisters, because the seed of faith and hope within us, which is a gift of God, will never be stamped out. The gospel, excuse me, as the apostle John reminds us in 1 John.

We who are His have the gospel promise that's sure, more sure than the rising sun itself. We must therefore read these promises and trust in Him every day, day by day. Yes, indeed, life is hard.

There is struggling. Sanctification is incomplete. You will fall flat on your face.

You may even regress and fall away from the church. That's why we don't believe when people are cast out of the church through excommunication that it's over necessarily for them. They can repent and come back.

It's happened. It's possible if God is involved. Life can be frustrating to be sure, even to the point of despair or anger.

It can be terrifying at times seeing how easily we fall into sin. You know your struggles. Yet through all this, you must keep your eyes upon the Word and the truth therein and these infallible grounds of assurance, the Word of truth that Paul gave in verse 18 for that matter that we have before us.

And make it your own. The Lord will preserve you for His heavenly kingdom. Not just Paul the apostle, though somehow he was special.

He had better faith and better obedience than you. But all His saints have the same promise, the same gospel hope. You do as well.

This is your promise. He will preserve you for His heavenly kingdom. It is this hope that Paul offers elsewhere in Romans 8, and I did not finish reading Romans 8, and I will now finish reading Romans 8, verse 38.

For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 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. Amen. Let us pray.

Father God Almighty, be with us and be with Your people and draw us unto You, I pray, if we have not repented and fled from our own self-righteousness, but rather, God, to trust in Christ's righteousness and to cling to Your promises that You are preserving us, that You are working in indeed through us. Yes, we are called to repent. Yes, we are called to believe.

But we know we will fail, but Christ never fails. We have His prayers. We have the Spirit.

We have eternal election. We have the covenant promises, God Almighty. May these warm our hearts and strengthen our resolve this week as we follow You, asking day by day for more of Your mercy upon us, we pray.

Amen.