

# “CHOSEN BY GOD FOR ALL TIME”

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October 23, 2016, 10:30 am

**Scripture Texts: Ephesians 1:11-14**

## Introduction

We are talking about election and elections. Last week we saw Scripture teaches God is a sovereign God having sovereign power and authority over absolutely everything in His universe, including to whom out of all of fallen humanity He will show His mercy and salvation.

I used Ephesians 1 as a basis for my sermon, “Chosen by God from Before all Time” meaning from before the foundations of the earth.

Here is how the Canons of Dort sum up this doctrine of God’s sovereign choosing of the elect:

“Before the foundation of the world, by sheer grace, according to the free good pleasure of His will, He chose in Christ to salvation a definite number of particular people out of the entire human race, which had fallen by its own fault from its original innocence into sin and ruin. . . . He did this in Christ, whom he also appointed from eternity to be the mediator, the head of all those chosen, and foundation of their salvation” (Dort I, Article 7).

This morning I want to carry the conversation to its logical and Biblical conclusion based again on Ephesians 1, under the title, “Chosen by God For All Time.”

Let’s begin with a definition so we understand what we are talking about and so we are all on the same page.

**Definition:** “The perseverance of the saints means that all those who are truly born again will be kept by God’s power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives” (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 788).

The elect are predestined, the predestined are called, the called are justified, the justified are sanctified, the sanctified are glorified. And from this group, none are lost. God is sovereign over their salvation from beginning to end.

This is sometimes referred to as “once saved always saved” or the eternal security of believers, and the doctrine is called the perseverance or *preservation* of the saints. I

actually like the preservation of the saints by God better because it emphasizes and underscores that it's God's action and not ours.

I picture this doctrine to be a bit like all those wild amusement rides at the fair grounds. They strap you in real tight and put on the buckles and lock the latches. And then no matter what happens or how wild the ride gets or how often your world turns upside down or spins around, you are secure, you don't go flying off, you aren't lost.

Between the beginning of the Christian ride which is justification by faith and the end of the ride which is glorification at the resurrection there are no dropouts, bailouts, pushouts or fall outs. The sovereign faithfulness of God from all eternity, protects and preserves those whom He chooses.

Let's take a quick survey of Scripture to make sure we are not just taking a verse or two as our support and to show that we are not building a whole doctrine on a very small foundation.

All the doctrines of grace have come under attack through the centuries, and this one especially.

Many insist we cannot know with any certainty who is elect. The regenerate believer can lose their salvation by the same free will by which they accepted Christ in the first place.

### **Scriptures on Preservation (perseverance) of the Saints:**

**John 6:38** For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me.

**John 10:27** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

**I Corinthians 1:7b** "...our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 ... will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful.

**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.

**I Peter 1:3** According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is

imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, *kept* in heaven for you, **5** who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

### **Ephesians 1:11-14, God's seal and guarantee.**

**Ephesians 1:11** In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, **12** so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. **13** 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.

One of the chief evidences of God's sovereign purpose to persevere to the end those whom He saves is the "*seal*" God places on us, the seal of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word that Paul uses here that is translated "*guarantee*" is a legal and business term that means "first installment, down payment, pledge" and represents "a payment which obligates the contracting party to make further payments" (BAGD, p. 109).

When I made a reservation down at the Inn at Lynden for Dr. Nederhood, they asked for a guarantee, so I left my credit card number as a way of saying I am good for it, I will come back and pay in full.

The Holy Spirit is God's down payment, His escrow, His collateral, His signature, that we are signed, sealed and delivered. The deal is done. We will receive the inheritance He promised us.

The word seal refers to seals that would be put on documents in wax. They were the mark of authenticity and they identified the writer or author. The seal distinguished between what was genuine and what was fraudulent. The Holy Spirit is the seal on our adoption papers.

**Ephesians 4:30** Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

**II Corinthians 1:22** [it is God] who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Our confidence and assurance don't come from us or from within or from the flesh, but from the Holy Spirit. It doesn't rest on anything human, but on something holy.

When God gives us His Holy Spirit He is committing Himself to us to carry us all the way through to the final blessing of eternal life.

The Holy Spirit is God's unchanging promise that the riches of His inheritance in heaven are in fact ours and they will not be retracted. This is why Paul can speak of such future promises in the present tense. They are as good as given. God has taken the decisive step.

**Now let's address a couple questions that come to mind from this teaching of Scripture.**

**First**, it is plain from Scripture that there are many who may claim to be believers and many who exhibit the external signs of conversion, who in the end finally fall away. There are false brethren, wolves in sheep's clothing.

**Matthew 7:21** "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. 22 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?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

**I John 1:6** If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

**I 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.

This verse explains what is going on when someone fails to persevere. It's not a sign that you can in fact lose your salvation, but rather it's a sign that that person was not elect and justified to begin with.

**Second**, this doctrine is especially open to abuse. This precious truth is abused when it becomes an excuse to sin or an excuse to neglect prayer or an excuse for having the lowest possible standards for holy living. Why not go on sinning since we know we are secure?

Paul confronts this twisting of truth.

**Romans 6:1** What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? **2** By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? **3** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were

buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might *walk in newness of life*.

**Hebrews 3:12** Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. **13** But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. **14** For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

**Matthew 7:15** “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **16** *You will recognize them by their fruits.* ... **18** A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. **19** Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20** Thus *you will recognize them by their fruits.*

These passages are written to encourage us never to take our faith for granted or to take it lightly, or to neglect it thinking it doesn't matter how I live if I am one of the elect. The point is that living by faith in Jesus Christ is one of the evidences of our saving faith. Those who fall away are giving evidence that their faith was never real in the first place.

All the Scriptures that call us to take our faith seriously and to seek and strive in no way contradict the Scriptures that teach that our salvation belongs to the Lord and it is He who save and protects and perseveres.

**Philippians 2:12** Therefore, my beloved ... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, **13** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Human responsibility is set next to Divine sovereignty. We are responsible to bear fruit but we are not alone, there is vine and branch. We are called to fight the good fight of faith, but we never fight alone, we have the armor of God. We must fight, but He will give the victory.

The test of the genuineness of our faith is our perseverance in faith and holiness in life with repentance.

This doctrine is one of the doctrines of grace. It testifies to the grace of God to save us and protect us and preserve us to the end. We are not on our own or left to our own strength. The sovereign God who calls us also performs in us that which He has called us to do.

In this great doctrine *there are conditions and there is assurance*. We are commanded but then we are enabled. What is required will be guaranteed. We are to hold on to God even as He holds unto us.

We live in a constantly changing world. Everything in this life is insecure. God knows our deep desire for security and He intends to satisfy that need in His love and power. Why does He do it this way? To magnify the glory of His salvation, to magnify the glory of His Son in whom we have salvation and to magnify the power of His Holy Spirit who seals and guarantees our salvation.

Take comfort and hope in the promise of God that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion. Don't neglect this great doctrine of the faith. It has been given to us for our comfort. What is our only comfort in life and death? That we belong body and soul to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

“Once enrolled in the lists of this Church, sinners are safe for eternity; they are never cast away. The election of God the Father, the continual intercession of God the Son, the daily renewing and sanctifying power of God the Holy [Spirit], surround and fence them in like a garden enclosed. Not one bone of Christ's mystical Body shall ever be broken; not one lamb of Christ's flock shall ever be plucked out of His hand” (J.C. Ryle).

**Isaiah 43:1-7** But now thus says the Lord,

he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

3 For I am the Lord your God, 4 you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you,

5 Fear not, for I am with you;

7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

This is our security in this life and in the life to come. God wants you to know that He doesn't just leave it up to you or leave you twisting in the wind. God wants you to feel secure in the storms. God wants you to feel secure in Him, so that we will glorify Him. God wants you to feel secure in His love. God wants you to feel secure in His power. God wants you to know He is for you.

**Prayer:** Holy Father, thank you that you are a God who is faithful to all that you promise and that you are a God who follows through, what you begin you bring to completion. You are the potter and we are the clay. Thank you for seating us with Christ in the heavenly places and for securing our citizenship in heaven.