

Series: Acts

Title: Preserved to Persevere

Scripture: Acts 21: 8-16

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In a world of suffering and sorrow, to preserve the faith of His people amid so many and sore tests, trials, buffetings, disappointments, betrayals by friends and professed brethren in Christ, is infinitely more wonderful than if a man should succeed in carrying an unsheltered candle alight across an open moor when a hurricane was blowing.

—Arthur W. Pink

**Proposition:** Those who are regenerated, called, and converted, are sanctified by the Spirit and grace of God and everlastingly preserved by God so that they persevere in faith unto the end.

In our text, three men, besides the apostle Paul, stand out as illustrations of this truth: Philip the evangelist, Agabus the prophet, and Mnason of Cyprus.

### PHILIP THE EVANGELIST

**Acts 21: 8: And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and abode with him. 9: And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.**

We first met Philip when there arose a need for faithful men to take the responsibility in issuing provisions for the widows in the church.

Acts 6: 2: Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3: Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4: But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5: And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, **and Philip**, [and so on...]

Later, the Lord sent Philip to the Samaritans. On his way, he preached to the Ethiopian eunuch.

Acts 8: 40:...passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

Caesarea is where we find Philip in our text. About 30 years have passed. Here he is believing on Christ the Lord: not only faithful to preach the word wherever the Lord would have him to go, but also to raise his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He took in Paul and the brethren into his own home. By effectual grace of God, Philip persevered in the faith.

### AGABUS, THE PROPHET

**Acts 21: 10: And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.**

We first met Agabus in the early days in the church at Antioch.

Acts 11: 27: And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28: And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Around 15 years or more have passed. Agabus is still going where God sends him, declaring what our Lord gave him to declare. Agabus continued in the faith.

### MNASON, OF CYPRUS

**Acts 21: 15: And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. 16: There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.**

The word "old" may or may not refer to his physical age. Without a doubt:

Proverbs 16:31: The hoary head *is* a crown of glory, *if* it be found in the way of righteousness.

But it certainly means he was old spiritually--probably both; he had been a believer for a long, long time. Thirty years has passed since the Lord Jesus walked this earth and very likely this man was one of the few left from that time. Here, we find him providing lodging for the apostle Paul in Jerusalem when such a work of faith could cost him dearly.

Each of these three: Philip, Agabus and one Mnason of Cyprus had, by God's grace, persevered in the faith.

By God's grace, his elect believe and keep on believing. We begin in faith, continue in faith and die in faith. Only those who continue in faith shall enter into glory. Christ was faithful as a son over his own house;

Hebrews 3: 6:...whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Illustration: Hurricane not in the times, in our flesh.

So what is the food of our souls which strengthens us in these sinful, weak, helpless bodies? How can we be sure God preserves us so that we continue in the faith? If we were to look into every passage which answers these questions then we would cover all of God's word for it is on every page. But in the time we have, I want to give you 4 things.

Divisions: The Immutability of God; The Provision of God; The Satisfaction and Intercession of Christ Jesus; and the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

## **I. THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD**

Immutability is a fancy word which means God does not change. What our God purposed from eternity, he shall perform. For instance, his love is eternal, everlasting, unchanging and unchangeable.

**Jeremiah 31:3: The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.**

**Psalm 94:14: For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.**

We have been seeing the awful rebellion of the sons of Jacob as we go through the book of Isaiah. That is every sinner whom God saves by his grace.

He chose his people knowing fully that according to his purpose each one would be defiled by Adam's one transgression. Not only this, but it pleased him to keep us in these bodies of sin unto final glory.

And because both were according to his purpose, none of his promises are based on any good or evil in us. God's elect can do nothing to change God's purpose to save them. The God of salvation will not alter the thing that is gone out of his lips, nor change his mind; he is "of one mind, and who can turn him?" Job 23: 13. There is no "variableness nor shadow of turning" with the true and living God of glory. (James 1: 17.)

To assert that one whom he purposed to save, one who Christ redeemed, one in whom the Holy Spirit abides can perish in hell is to dishonor the very character of our God. Not only his immutability but:

- His wisdom—he wisely orders the means he uses for the salvation of his saints
- His power—he has absolute power over all things to save effectually in sovereign power. God himself is a wall of fire about the believer.

- His goodness, grace, and mercy--"His compassions fail not"
- His faithfulness

Illustration: Brother Stalnaker questioned by Brother Scott Richardson—"What if God changes his mind?"

Malachi 3:6: For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

## **II. THE POWER AND FAITHFULNESS OF GOD TO PROVIDE WHAT HE HAS PROMISED. THE PROVISION OF GOD.**

**Jeremiah 32:40: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.**

In this world of ever-changing sinners the only consistency is change. Look over the ages: no kingdom has lasted, but one; no king has reigned forever, but one; no people have remained secure, but one.

The promise of God is everlasting because it is not a covenant of works. It is not based on a condition that a sinner has to keep. The everlasting promise of God is:

- Determined by his sovereign, free grace
- Ordered and made sure by the triune God
- Ratified and signed in the blood of Christ Jesus the Mediator for his people
- Made, not to us by ourselves, but to Christ Jesus who is Head over us.
- Written on the believers heart by God who can not lie.

When he writes this word in our hearts--IN SOVEREIGN EFFECTUAL POWER--he puts his fear in our hearts—he makes us to behold that our God is the thrice holy almighty of heaven and earth. He has power to ever keep us with these words, "they shall not depart from me."

Romans 11: 29: For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.

Illustration: Race in potato sack. At times I feel like I am running a race with my feet tied together: we are few in number, need a quieter meeting place.

How this life is full of discouragements! Discouragements from the sin we see in ourselves, the hardships this world presents us, the many obstacles in the way. Yet, the promise is,

Job 17:9. "The righteous also shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

Christ is the Way, the Lord our Righteousness in whom we are righteous. At times you may stumble and grow weary. But if you are his, you will never, go back. Though our going may be slower at times and slower than others, you will not turn aside and God will not allow you to be turned. **I will not turn away from them, to do them good.**

1 Corinthians 10:13:...God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

It is our responsibility to continue in the faith, but responsibility is not ability. Our continuing is not because of our power and strength any more than our perfect acceptance with God is because of us. Our full sufficiency—in righteousness and in strength--is the triune God in Christ Jesus the Son of God. We are Kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation" (1 Peter 1:5.)

Kept in the love of God; Kept in the covenant of grace; Kept in the hands of Christ; Kept in a state of grace through faith; Kept from Satan and all deception of all false teachers; Kept from the dominion, power, and tyranny of sin; Kept seeing by faith that which is invisible but real and ours: the full possession of salvation "He which establisheth us with you in Christ is God" (2 Corinthians 1:21.) If God had not said it, I dare not say it; but God says and I dare not tell you otherwise! His promise is everlasting; his faithfulness forever; his power unlimited.

### III. THE ATONEMENT AND INTERCESSION OF CHRIST JESUS THE LORD.

**Isaiah 53:11: He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Roman 8:34: Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.**

The very purpose for which Christ died was to declare God a just God and a Savior. Christ Jesus made satisfaction to God for each sinner for whom he died. Justice has been executed upon each one for whom he died. If one for whom Christ dies perishes under the wrath of God then God has executed judgment twice. It is God that justifieth—in eternity, at Calvary, in the time of his love when he gave you faith to enter into this grace, continually as he purges our conscious—who then can condemn? God says, "I will pardon them whom I reserve." WE MUST BE PRESERVED BECAUSE CHRIST MADE FULL ATONEMENT FOR EACH PARTICULAR CHOSEN CHILD OF GOD.

#### HE EVERLIVETH TO MAKE INTERCESSION FOR US

**John 17:11:...Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*. 15: I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil....20: Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;**

He prays his Father to keep us as he keeps us, that the Father may receive the glory even as the Son. He prays, "Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." The Father answers, **I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again. (John 12: 28.)**

Not preserved from physical death, not from persecution or affliction, but kept from the evil (Joh 18:8,9.)

- From the evil of separation to union in Christ
- From the evil of this world into Christ our Sanctification
- From being overcome by unbelief to the victory of faith which perseveres.

Those for whom he died, died when he died and rose when he arose. Our death is gone, only eternal life remains, we shall never perish. Listen to the words of security: **neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand...and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand:** Those who are trusting in their own hand are in no way safe, but those in God's hand can never perish. They are in his possession, under his guide, in his care, under his protection

### IV. THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD

**2 Corinthians 1:21: Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, *is* God; 22: Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.**

God predestinated his elect unto the adoption of children. His will of purpose was God taking his chosen sons and daughters into his family in eternity. He has appointed the hour when each one shall be born of him. No one has power to thwart that predestinated appointment.

Galatians 4: 6: And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7: Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Adoption, means sonship, and sonship means inheritance--the Holy Spirit is the earnest of it. Do you think God would reserve the incorruptible inheritance in heaven for you, son or daughter, then stand by and watch you perish in hell? God forbid! Predestination and glorification are inseparably united: "Whom he did predestinate—they he also glorified" (Romans 9:12, 13.)

Ephesians 1:14:...is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

The Holy Spirit which Comforts, leads, guides you into all truth, abides with you forever: We may think he has left at times, when we cry and he moves in his time, not ours. He may suffer us to be afflicted. But he never casts off his people. You who are born of God are his inheritance, his children, his jewels, his peculiar treasure. Oh, he is faithful who has promised!

Matthew 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Not even the most cunning and artful false teacher can lead the believer out of the Way. My sheep hear my voice, a stranger they will not follow. Thanks be unto the Holy Spirit which guides us into all truth.

Oh, what peace and soul-cheering comfort to know you are in the hand of the Governor of the universe. His sheep shall never perish. All spiritual blessings are yours who are born of God. You are eternally secure. You stand in the sure mercies in which David rested all his hope. All lesser needs shall be provided. The promises are yes and amen in Christ.

God gets the glory in our perseverance, brethren. The glory of the three divine Persons is concerned in the final perseverance and preservation of the saints; for should one perish, where would be the glory of the Father in choosing them to salvation? And the glory of the Son in redeeming them? and the glory of the Spirit in the sanctification of them?

But because God has created you for his glory—you can be sure, he shall preserve you and those he preserves, shall persevere.

**AMEN!**