

GOD IS ABLE
(PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS)
by Ron Harvey

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy . . .

Jude 24

INTRODUCTION

One of the great concerns that we all have when we become a Christian is, “Will we be able to do this.” Will we be able to lay that old nature aside? Will we be able to keep God’s commandments? Will we be able to take up our cross and follow him? Will we be able to put our selfish desires away? Will we be able to keep ourselves from false doctrine and heresy? Will we be able to endure temptations and persecutions? And will we even be able to remain a believer to the end?

And this is a grave concern because Jesus said,

But, he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Matthew 10:22; 24:13

Therefore, it appears that he who does not endure to the end shall not be saved. We are going to look at several passages of Scripture which clearly teach the necessity of continuing in the faith.

To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.

But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.

Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the Gentile.

But glory, honour and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.

Romans 2:7-10

This passage states the necessity of continuing in well doing, whose end is eternal life. For those who do not continue in well doing, there will be wrath.

And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in amongst them, and with them partakes of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches: but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

Boast not against the branches: but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

Well: because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear.

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

See Romans 11:17-22

One of the problems with the Jews was that they did not continue on in the faith. And the Bible says they were cut off. Likewise, verse 22 says the Gentiles will be cut off if they do not continue in the faith.

Now this passage is talking about the Jews and the Gentiles in their generations -- that is, their children and their grand children were cut off. Some of the branches were cut off. And this was for unbelief. (v.20) So, the unbelieving branches were cut off.

Likewise the generations of the Gentiles shall be cut off if they don't believe. That is, their children and grandchildren shall be cut off for unbelief. (v.22)

This is an absolute principle. Faith is always present where there is salvation. If God has saved you, then you believe. If you don't believe, then God has not saved you. And faith is a continuing faith. You don't believe for 30 minutes one Sunday morning and then live the next 40 years in unbelief and expect that you are saved.

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

See I Timothy 4:16

This verse would suggest that it is necessary to **continue** in the doctrine in order to be finally saved. If you leave the doctrine, then you have left the faith and leaving the faith proves that you are not saved.

But Christ is a Son over his own house: whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

See Hebrew 3:6; 12-15

This is very clear in stating that we are Christ's only if we hold fast our confidence to the end.

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For

yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

See Hebrews 10:35-39

Notice first, that it is possible to draw back unto perdition (damnation).

Notice second, there is a group that draws back, but we are not of them.

Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning, If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

See I John 2:24

The holy equation would look like this:

Continuing = Being saved. Or, Not continuing = Not being saved.

One thing is clear and that is, it is absolutely necessary to remain in the faith and to endure temptations and to be obedient and to be engaged in the various Christian duties in order to stand in the last day. Our faith must continue. Our good works must continue. Our love for Him must continue. And if these things do not continue, then it is a sign that we are not saved.

And the question then arises, “Who is able to do it?” Our old nature is too overpowering. It has too much sway over us. We are weak and yet, we must endure to the end in order to be saved.

The simple answer is that we can’t do it. We couldn’t save ourselves in the beginning. We were dead in our trespasses and sins and we were not able to save ourselves, but God saved us. And it is clear that we **continue** in the faith not by our own power but by his power.

And that leads us to the first comforting point of our text,

I. Jesus is able.

Now unto him that is able.

If you never understand anything else about the Christian life, understand that it is God that is able. If God required us to be able, then who could stand? And I can tell you, not a one of us. Not one of us would continue in the faith. Not one of us would endure to the end. Not one of us would live a life pleasing to God.

But, our text says, “*God is able.*”

This is a fundamental truth of the Bible, and that is, “*God is able.*”

And a second fundamental truth of the Bible is that we are unable.

That is why the great truth of salvation is,

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Philippians 2:13

Now God is imminently able. And when I say God, let me refer specifically to Jesus because this is who is referenced in our text when it says, “*Now unto him that is able.*”

- I wish we all could have been there in the beginning when Jesus simply spoke the word and the universe was created. Can you imagine the power that was generated in that one glorious act of speaking the universe into existence? Surely, this should convince us that he is able. But,
- Jesus was also able when he breathed life into his creatures. Who is able to do that? No one has ever been able to create life. No scientist in the history of the world has been able to create life. That’s why John said, “*In him was life.*” Only Jesus is able to create a living being.
- Jesus also proves he is able by holding the entire universe in place day after day after day. Who else has such power? We can’t even keep our houses from falling down over the years. But, Jesus is able to keep the universe intact.

And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Colossians 1:17

- Jesus was able . . . when he parted the sea and ushered his people across on dry ground and then closed the sea back again on top of the Egyptians.
- Jesus was able . . . when he became a human being and lived a life perfectly obedient to the Father.
- Jesus was able . . . when he laid down his life in the face of great suffering. All of us would have failed, but Jesus was able.
- Jesus was able . . . when by his own power he raised his dead body from the grave.
- Jesus has always been able . . . to seek out his sheep and save them.

And our text goes beyond even that and says that once Jesus has found his sheep and saved them,

II. He is able to keep them from falling.

In our text, it says he is able to keep us from falling. The verse says, he is able to present us faultless before his glorious presence. This suggests that Jesus is able to keep us so that in the last day - that day of judgment - we will be able to stand as a saved person. And this is what the Bible teaches in other places.

Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

I Peter 1:3-5

So, our text says Jesus is able to keep us from falling. And if he has proven himself to be able in every other way, then we should have great confidence that he is able to keep us from falling.

Now it is true that our Christian journey is treacherous. We are always in danger of leaving the faith, humanly speaking. This may be why the Scriptures say,

Work out your own salvation in fear and trembling.

Philippians 2:12

Give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.

I Peter

So in some sense we live in fear and trembling because we know we battle principalities and powers and the world system and our own sin nature. And we know we are not able. And we fear lest we would fall away and not be counted among the elect of God.

But the great comfort of the Christian is to know that Jesus will not let the elect fall? Does that not mean everything to you? He is able and he will not let you be lost. This is comforting beyond measure.

Example: If someone told you, “We are going to have a contest to determine who will win a million dollars. This is going to be a basketball contest – one on one. First one to 20 points wins. And this is a tournament. And you are up against some of the best basketball players in the world. And furthermore, if you lose, you will be placed in prison for the rest of your life. Now, Ms. Grandmother, what do you think your chances would be of winning that basketball contest? The odds would be stacked against every one of us. They would be insurmountable odds. You might as well start packing your toothbrush for prison. But what if they let you use a substitute to play for you? Why, you would pick the best basketball player in the world to play for you. You would find the one who is most able and you would put your trust in him.

And Jude tells us that Jesus is able to keep us from falling. Thank God He is able, because we are not able. But he is able to keep us from falling.

So, if there is evidence in your life that you are a Christian, if you love Him now and you believe in him now and if you have good works to recommend you now, then be confident, very confident, that Jesus will keep you from falling. And when you are old, you will love Him still and you will believe in Him still and you will have good works to recommend you still.

Of all the billions and billions of people whom Jesus has saved, not one was saved by his own strength. And not one ever continued to the end by his own strength. Each and every one would ultimately confess that Jesus kept him to the end.

Now, let there be no mistake, we all have seasons of declension. And, sometimes our faith is shaken almost to unbelief, but Jesus prevails in our heart, because he is able.

If we wander off so that we would be lost, Jesus leaves the ninety and nine and finds us.

He may come find us in a bar somewhere. He may come find us in various places of sin. He may come find us in our bitterness and anger. He may come find us in our selfishness and lust. He may come find us in our sadness and in our depression. And he may find us beginning to worship another god. But he will come find us and bring us home, because we are his possession and he is able.

And when he finds us, he brings us back to repentance and faith, back to the good works that were ordained for us. But mainly, he brings us back to loving him. You see, once again, the truth is, we love him because he first loved us. And though at times we wander away, he takes the initiative and finds us and loves us anew and he brings us back the same way he found us to begin with – by loving us and drawing us and keeping us from ultimately falling away into perdition.

Now we have seen that he is able and that he is able to keep us from falling. And look further in our text and you will see that,

III. He is able to present us faultless.

Of all the great works of Jesus, this is the one that may be his most impressive work. When he presents us to the Father, he is able to present us faultless. God the Father will see no fault in us.

At the Great Throne, that is, at the final judgment of all men, Jesus will divide humanity into two groups.

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.
Matthew 25:33

Note, on that final day, if you get divided off to the left side of Jesus with the goats, you will know that you are in a lot of trouble. It will be unspeakable trouble. It will be unbearable trouble. For those on the left will be found faulty – and not just faulty, but desperately wicked. And God’s rage will be poured out on the wicked. But if you are separated to the right of Jesus, shout for joy, because those on the right shall be presented faultless.

And our text says, *Jesus is able to present you faultless*. First,

A. Jesus is able to present us faultless because he was faultless.

Thank God for Jesus and his perfections. Had Jesus been faulty, then he would not be able to present us faultless. But our Savior is imminently faultless.

Example: Pontius Pilate, that old Roman governor, had no idea that he was a prophet, but he prophesied about the perfections of Jesus when he said, “I find no fault in him.”

That’s right Pontius. That’s because there was no fault in Him. Had there been one detectible fault in him then Pontius Pilate could have turned Jesus over to the Jews for crucifixion with a clear conscience. But he couldn’t find one thing. And he washed his hands of the matter.

Example: Neither could the Jewish leaders find fault with Jesus. That’s why they hired false witnesses to testify against him.

So, Jesus was pure and undefiled and unspotted from the world and untouched by sin at all. And he kept all of God’s commandments from alpha to omega. And he sought after the Father’s will like he was looking for eternal treasure. And his whole heart was devoted to this one thing – the Father’s will. And every step he took was in submission to that will. And so, Jesus was faultless. And because he was faultless, he could bear the sins of his people. And this Jesus did.

Now, not only is Jesus able because he was faultless, but

B. Jesus is able to present us faultless, because he is our substitute.

Jesus picked up the basketball and said, I’m coming in to substitute for my sheep. And Michael Jordan and all the NBA stars quaked in their boots. Now Jesus didn’t play a basketball game, but he did play the game of life for us and he let his life count for ours. And when he had lived for us, then he died for us and he let his death count for us. And when he rose from the dead, he let his resurrection count for us. And then, in that last day when he presents us to the Father, he will present himself as our substitute and thus present us faultless in Him.

What a blessed salvation we have in Him.

Some final thoughts about this message:

1. The passage suggests the inherent weakness of Christians. It suggests that left on our own, we would fall away. And this is the testimony of other Scripture as well. We are pictured elsewhere as helpless sheep in need of a Savior. We are a branch in need of a vine. And it seems to me that it is only as we discover our own weakness that we learn to appreciate more the One who is strong. The more we discover our own inability, the more we come to depend on the One who is able. Listen to David who prays,

Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.
Psalm 17:5

Does this not scream out, Lord preserve me and keep me because I am weak? And further, David says in that great Psalm,

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Does this not say, if the Lord were not my shepherd, I would surely want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

Does this not say, if he did not make me lie down in green pastures, I would surely toil hungry in barren fields.

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

Does this not say, if he didn't lead me beside the still waters, I would die of thirst.

He restoreth my soul.

Does this not say, if he didn't restore my soul, I would be forever alienated from Him.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Does this not say, if he didn't lead me in the paths of righteousness, I would go down the path of sin.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

Does this not say, if he weren't with me, then I should fear evil for it would overtake me and I would surely perish.

For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Does this not say, if there was no discipline by his rod and staff, I would not be comforted.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

Does this not say, if He did not prepare a table before me, then I should grovel before mine enemies in hunger.

Thou anointest my head with oil;

Does this not say, if He did not anoint my head with oil, then my scrapes and bruises would fester and eat me like a cancer.

So, our text suggests the inherent weakness of Christians. Next, since weakness is our condition,

2. Humbleness and humility should be our attitude.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Philippians 2:3

Even Jesus said,

I am gentle and humble in heart.
Matthew 11:29

I think if we fully understand our weak condition, then it should not be too hard to be truly humble and to esteem others better than ourselves. But if we think we are something when in fact we are nothing then pride and arrogance take the place of humility.

Now, I think our text also suggests the fact that,

3. Mere professors, those who have made some attachment to Christ, but not a true attachment, will fall away.

- Those who claim to be saved by works will fall.
- Those who claim to be saved by some religious act like reciting a prayer, or joining a church, or being baptized, or saying “Hail Mary’s” will fall.
- Those who claim to be saved because they are good people will fall away.
- Those who claim to be saved because they have kept the commandments of God will fall away.

You see, the outward church is made up of those who are really in Christ, and those who merely profess Christ. And, those who merely profess will fall away. Their faith will fail, their good works will fail, their sin will overcome them, they will not adhere to true doctrine, they will fall in the day of temptation and persecution and they will not return to Christ.

But, for those of us truly in Christ, by election, by a true calling and by a holy regeneration,

4. Our God is able to keep us from falling, and not only able, but also determined to keep us from falling.

Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ,
Jude 1

And lastly, I'd like you to see from our text that when he has preserved us through it all, when he has kept us from falling, when our faith has overcome and endured to the end by his power and grace, and when he has presented us faultless to the Father, then

5. We shall have exceeding joy.

There is great joy coming for us and it is right around the corner. And this joy is not just your common everyday exhilaration over a ball game or a paycheck. The Bible describes your coming joy as exceeding joy. The word used here is used of those who would leap for joy. And when Jesus presents you faultless before the Father, you will leap up with exceeding joy. You will jump and shout and your heart will sing praises to Jesus who has kept you and presented you faultless.

And there shall be no sin found in you, because being in Christ, your sins will not be counted against you. And you shall be found faultless, just like Jesus. And your heart will leap up in your throat for thankfulness to Him and you will love Him like you have never loved him before.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Jude 24, 25