



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 200

**God does not preserve us irrespective of how we live** – Given that the Reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints affirms that the believers’ perseverance is fully based on God, founded on His love and grace, some have criticized this saying that this doctrine leads to indolence, carelessness, and even uninhibited sinful living. Such criticism stems from a false understanding of this doctrine, for though this doctrine teaches that our perseverance does not depend upon our will or works but upon God and God alone, it does not teach that God preserves people irrespective of what they do in their lives.

Earlier in this study series we said that there are Christian denominations which hold to the doctrine of “eternal security,” which we said is not the same as the Reformed doctrine. On the one hand, it is interesting to note that even some Arminian churches, while rejecting Reformed theology, proudly affirm the “eternal security” of believers. Such may seem to have taken a bold step forward, perhaps even claiming to be in agreement with the fifth point of Calvinism, but in reality this is a misnomer.

The essential question to be asked of them is, “On what basis is a believer eternally secure?” If Arminian theology teaches that God elects people based on His foreknowledge of what they will do with His offer of salvation, that it is man who casts the final vote, and thus based on their free will they are saved and enter the kingdom of God, then based on what can they claim that believers are eternally secure? If God does not irresistibly change the will of man, causing him to inevitably believe, and then to direct and preserve him to the end, and all of this being based on His immutable decree and love, then such a believer can as easily as having willed himself into the kingdom of God will himself out of it. What is the basis of his eternal security? If it is the will of man then there is no security! So by affirming a doctrine of eternal security, all such churches are in fact teaching a contradiction.

On the other hand, we deliberately stay away from using the term “eternal security” of believers, not because it isn’t true, but because “eternal security,” or also known as “once saved always saved,” if not properly explained can lead to incorrect conclusions, fanning the flames of criticism, that as long as someone is saved he can live any way he wants, reveling in sin and iniquity, and still be eternally secure.

The idea that a person can live anyway he wants, carousing and abandoning himself to sin, continuing in unrepentant immorality, and still think he will persevere to the end, is a false security, absolutely and vehemently rejected by the Bible. The Bible is replete with verses which call believers to a life of active vigilance, steadfastness, obedience, and endurance; to a diligent and continuous use of the God-given means of grace; to walk in the Spirit, to battle against sin, to deny self and follow Christ; to continuously put off the old nature and to put on the new nature; and thus grow in holiness, progressively be transformed into the image of Christ (Job 17:9; Psalm 31:23; Matthew 24:9-13; Luke 9:23; John 8:31-32; Acts 14:22; Romans 6:4, 13; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 1:21-23; 3:1-12; Hebrews 10:38-39; James 1:25; 1 Peter 2:11; 2 Peter 1:9-11; 1 John 2:4-6; Revelation 2:26; 14:12).

Thus true justifying faith is persevering faith. The eternal security of a believer does not come to pass through indifference and passivity, presuming that once saved means always saved no matter how one lives; rather, God brings it about through the believer’s active and lifelong perseverance. As we saw in the doctrine of sanctification, though regeneration is a monergistic work of God in us, sanctification is a synergistic work, where God works in us and we work also, and thus God accomplishes all of His purposes in us (Jeremiah 32:40; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Philippians 1:6; 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:3-5). Thus, our eternal security, our perseverance, comes to pass through God’s work of sanctification in us. God did not choose us, and Christ did not die for us, merely to save us; rather, God chose us to sanctify us, to be holy and without blemish. We are eternally secure because we persevere; and we persevere because God graciously works in us and preserves us to the end; and He does all of this for His glory.