

## 1205 Christology Extra Notes Perseverance

This additional material is drawn from T.R. Schreiner and A.B. Caneday, *The Race Set Before Us*, IVP, 2001.

### 1. The Nature of Salvation

The basic thesis is that present and future dimensions of salvation are two aspects of an indivisible whole. E.g. 1 Pet 1:5 “who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” This is to understand salvation as durative rather than punctiliar/punctiform. A single continuous process with distinguishable components



This is supported by many scriptures that speak of salvation as something that will occur in the future e.g. Matt 10:22; Rom 5:9 – 10; 13:11; 1 Cor 3:15; 1 Thess 5:8 – 9; 1 Tim 2:15; 4:16; 2 Tim 4:18; Heb 9:28.

The kingdom of God has an inheritance that is still to come e.g. Matt 7:21; 25:31; Acts 14:22; 1 Cor 6:9 – 10; 15:50; Gal 5:21; Eph 1:14,18; 5:5; Col 3:24; 2 Thess 1:5; Heb 1:14; 1 Pet 1:4,9; James 1:21. This fits with the “already and not – yet” structure of Pauline eschatology. There is both participation and anticipation.

Redemption includes a future aspect e.g. Luke 21:28; Rom 8:23; Eph 1:13 – 14.

Eternal life can be spoken of prospectively e.g. Matt 10:29 – 30; 25:46; Rom 2:6 – 7; Gal 6:8; Tit 1:2; 3:7; James 1:12; Rev 2:10. (Typically, John locates eternal life in the present e.g. John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47, 54; 1 John 5:11 -13.)

Likewise, the marriage language of the New Testament is put in terms of betrothal e.g. Mark 2:19 – 20; John 3:29; 2 Cor 11:2; Rev 19:7; 21:2. The process of sanctification is like a bridal bath in preparation for the wedding itself, to be celebrated at the parousia (Eph 5:25 - 27).

This “already and not – yet” structure is not true of all the elements of salvation e.g. regeneration, reconciliation, new creation. Even those metaphors that are predominantly in the present (adoption, sonship, righteousness) can be spoken of in a future sense e.g. Rom 8:23; Matt 5:9; Phil 2:15; Rom 2:13; 3:20; Gal 5:5.

## 2. Warnings and Perseverance

Biblical warnings do not function to tell us “such people were never saved in the first place” (Grudem etc.). Even if this is true, this is not their purpose. Neither do they indicate people can lose their salvation (Arminianism). Both of these supposed interpretations fail to understand the logic of warning. If salvation is often future oriented (see above, and in relation to Hebrews in particular 1:14; 2:3, 10; 5:9; 9:28) then the admonitions in themselves convey nothing about either failure or fulfillment. A conditional promise of salvation, “if ...then”, does not equate with possible apostasy. Neither does it teach, “The one who is saved will persevere to the end”. Perseverance is a means that God has appointed by which one will be saved. Perseverance is only realized along the path of faith; it is not “something that is merely handed down to us” (Berkouwer). Caution does not indicate likely failure, but draws out a vigorous response of trust in God. God’s warnings serve his promises by turning us away from temptation to Christ.

A very helpful example of this principle is found in Acts 27:9 – 10, 22 -26,30 -32,44, “Paul advised them, 10 saying, “Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.” ... Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, 24 and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ 25 So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. 26 But we must run aground on some island....” And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, 31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.” 32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go.... And so it was that all were brought safely to land.”

It is through the urgency of Paul’s warning that the promise of the physical salvation of the entire party is fulfilled. “Paul did not incite doubt concerning God’s promise. Rather, his whole purpose was to strike fear in them not to neglect the necessary means of deliverance announced in the promise.” (Schreiner and Caneday p.211) God accomplishes his promised purposes by use of means. Conceivable consequences are not probable consequences.

## 3. Implications for Assurance

This view has implications for the experience of assurance of salvation. There is no warrant for assurance if one is doing the works of the flesh. The changes in our lives i.e. the fruit of the Spirit, are a God – given evidence of our salvation. Assurance is confirmed by our good works.

The warnings and admonitions of scripture evoke in us a desire to lay hold of Jesus Christ (Phil 3:12 - 16). This orientation is itself a witness to God's work in us. Those who desire assurance and reject the means by which it is maintained, especially good works, (the promises of God and the witness of the Holy Spirit are usually thought of as effortless), call into question the very nature of salvation.