

“The Doctrines of Grace: Part V of V”

There are five distinct biblical teachings recovered by Reformers in the seventeenth century that have become known by the acrostic TULIP: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. Now, TULIP does not summarize Reformed theology, but it does capture important biblical teachings in a simple way. My intent is to explain each of the five teachings for you to gain familiarity with these doctrines of grace.

The doctrine of grace known as “Persevering Grace” means that those who have been brought to faith in Jesus Christ will never be lost. Paul writes, “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.... We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence” (2 Cor. 4:8-9, 14). The author of Hebrews writes, “By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”

Unfortunately, there are three common misunderstandings about persevering grace. First, it is a misunderstanding to think that persevering grace means exemption from all danger. Instead, Scripture teaches that Christians will face hardship because they are Christians. Psalm 44 says, “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered” (22). Yet, Scripture also promises that God will keep his people (Psalm 121).

Second, it is a misunderstanding that Christians are kept from falling into sin. Romans 7 is an example of a Christian, Paul, wrestling with indwelling sin and the work of the Holy Spirit. “For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (15). In fact, the desire to walk in a manner worthy of God even in the struggle is a good indication of persevering grace.

Third, it is a misunderstanding that a mere profession of faith in Christ is sufficient. Persevering grace does not lead to false assumption or presumption. Instead, Scripture teaches us to give diligent attention to make “our calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1:10). This doesn’t mean that our work is the cause of our call and election. It means that our work helps to confirm our call and election. Standing firm in the face of suffering and persecution evidence persevering faith.

Remember, the object of faith is not your own strength. The object of faith is the God who will perfect, establish, strengthen, and restore you (1 Pet. 5:10). Turn away from yourselves and turn to the true and living God. His grace alone is persevering grace for His people. Trust Him.

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