

# The Perseverance of God

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This sermon examines how God perseveres in His efforts to seek and save sinful man.

One of the more interesting Bible studies is the one where we study the actual character of God.

We are blessed as Christians because unlike unbelievers, pagans, and skeptics who can only witness God's power and timelessness and call it something else (i.e. mother nature, the universe, the eco system, the gods of the earth),

Anything other than to give credit to the one who actually created everything.

we as Christians have at our disposal a book which not only reveals the God whose power created all of this, but also reveals something about God Himself, not just the creation but God Himself.

Unlike Star Trek and all of its imitators whose goal is to search the stars for knowledge and other life forms, They're going to be looking a long time.

we Christians have access to the information about the one who created the stars and all forms of life.

From the Bible we can know what God created as well as when He did, why He did, when it will end and what it all means, all from the Bible.

In addition to this we can also know the thinking, the character, and the demands of the one that made all things. That is what I want to do briefly here today in this lesson.

I want to focus on one characteristic of God, a characteristic that factors quite significantly in His relationship with us.

God's character has so many different facets.

He is holy, He is merciful, He is wise, He is gracious and kind, He is just and righteous, and He is also perseverant.

And it is His perseverance that I wish to speak about today.

Slide -**What is Perseverance?**

Before I talk about God's perseverance, I should explain what perseverance is so we will all be on the same page.

Slide -The dictionary defines perseverance as follows, "To try hard and continually in spite of obstacles and difficulties" or, "the quality of being persistent".

We say that a student perseveres in a difficult class,

Or the final four on Survivor persevered the heat, bugs and discomfort,

or that phone solicitor sure is persistent when she calls.

In the Bible this word is never directly used to describe God,

You will not find in the Bible someone saying God perseveres, not in that way.

rather it is used to describe how people should be or how they should act:

The original Greek word translates to the English words, perseverance, also meant endurance, steadfastness.

In Romans 13 Paul speaks of rulers who need to persevere in the task of governing the people.

**Slide** -Romans 13:6 “For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing.”

In Ephesians 6:18 he exhorts Christians to persevere in prayer and watchfulness on behalf of the church.

**Slide** -Ephesians 6:18 “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints”

This is accurate because mankind is weak and must focus,

We must continually will to reach goals whether they be material or spiritual.

Humans beings are easily distracted, fall victim to sin,

often quit because of obstacles or tests,

so, for us perseverance is a virtue to be cultivated and practiced if we want to achieve our goals.

Of course, for God there are no obstacles, God has no weakness to overcome.

He is never tempted to quit and so perseverance is **not** something He must acquire

God does **not** need to cultivate perseverance to improve His character.

This is one reason why this particular word is not used in describing Him.

But this is not to say that He does not exhibit this trait as part of His natural character.

The Bible does not use the word perseverance to describe God and His actions

but the Bible is filled with examples of God exhibiting this very quality.

### **Slide** -The Perseverance of God

Let me give you three examples of this. The first example;

#### **1. Slide** -God Perseveres in Judgement

Have you notices that from the Garden of Eden to the battle with the serpent in the Book of Revelation God continually judges His creation?

If you are a parent, teacher, or any kind of manager, you will know how difficult this can be, to continue in judgement

Anyone who is responsible for upholding the rules,

Anyone who is responsible for upholding the company policy, the law, the quality of something, knows that it is difficult.

You want to quit, compromise, change, let things slide, let someone else do it.

You get tired of having to discipline, judge, admonish.

This is why the youngest in the family are often "spoiled".

We say that sometimes as a joke but by the time you get to your last child, you think OK you can just raise yourself.

I done, I have had to say no a million times in the last 6 or 7 years with your brothers and sisters

You go for it.

It is why grand-parenting is fun, you do not have to judge, you do not have to discipline.

You want some candy before dinner, sure let's get some, I have a new package of candy right here.

you do not have to punish, that's one of the joys

Because when you're a parent you are always having to say no, I told you a hundred times no and it will always be no.

Persevering in Judgement is so difficult

From the beginning of time God has judged every man and woman,

every family, every leader, every nation, everyone in both the spiritual world and the physical world.

**And He has done this perfectly, consistently, and justly.**

You know when I have talked to someone who has lost a loved one,

And if that individual was not very faithful to the church or perhaps not interested in religion

People worry, I wonder what happens to grandpa or uncle Jerry and say do you think he made it to heaven

Which is an impossible question, I don't get to decide that, nor would I want to.

But one of the answers I find very comforting in situations like that,

Is to say God is just, God is fair. You can be absolutely sure that God will do the right thing

When we see how He perseveres in judgement it should do two things for us:

**1. Slide -Comfort us in the knowledge that the evil ones in this world will be judged.**

God will not quit until all justice is done. He will persevere

There's great comfort in that thought.

because sometimes when we look out into the world and we see the tremendous injustice being done to individuals.

Like for example;

Countries where they have had natural disasters and people are living in tents and they are cold and hungry.

Other nations will send food and supplies to help those people and greedy leaders will intercept all that aid and sell it and keep the profits for themselves and that is so wrong.

Or leaders of countries who are dropping bombs on their own people, that is so wrong.

And it seems that these leaders or those crooks get away with it

They live in big house and are fat cats while those poor people starve to death from disease, a miserable death

And these crooks keep living to they are in their 90's and then buried with flowers on their graves.

It's just not fair.

But when we think of the Perseverance of God in justice,

we can take comfort in the fact that God will not miss the opportunity to judge every single person.

And sometimes that is the only comfort we can take when viewing the injustice that takes place in the world.

And sometimes the injustice is not that far away, sometimes it has happened to our own families.

Bad things that have happened, selfish things that have happened.

Terrible things parents have done to children

Terrible things children have done to parents.

I have heard of situations when an aged mother was evicted by her own son out of her own house so he could get his hands on the property to sell it and make money with it.

You talk about wrong

**2. Slide -Warn us that we too will be judged so we must prepare for that time by believing and obeying Christ.**

Nothing will stand in the way of God's judgement, He will persevere.

This should make us happy or afraid depending on how we will be judged.

The second example;

**2. Slide -God Perseveres in Mercy**

When I read the Old Testament, especially the records of the various kings of Israel,

I am amazed by God's persevering mercy.

Now the Bible uses other words for this, words like lovingkindness or longsuffering, but these refer to the same thing.

**Slide** -Jonah tells us Jonah 4:2 "for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm."

Israel had various leaders would commit horrible sins, for example, burn their children on alters to pagan gods.

They would lead their people in all kinds of sinful activity

and yet God persevere and would preserve the nation from its enemies and provide food and shelter for **decades**.

You know in past elections people were terribly afraid that one person would become president

and the others would be terribly afraid that the other person would become president

and there are all kind of scenarios like the sky is going to fall if so and so get elected and things would fall apart

But if you look in the Old Testament some of these evil kings ruled for 20 to 30 and sometimes 40 years.

Not 4 years or 8 years but 40 years.

And then another king would come along and ask for forgiveness and make an effort at repentance and God would forgive and restore them to even more peace and prosperity.

Over and over again we see God not being stopped from loving His people and blessing them.

He persevered for centuries in His love for a people who were unlovable.

If I can make an aside statement here, talking about politics and so forth.

It is definitely ok to pray for our leaders, but I think it would be more useful if we pray for the nation as a whole as believers,

And our prayer should be God have mercy on us

God remember us who call on your name.

Remember He looked after the nation of Israel because they were the ones calling on His name.

There are millions of people here in the United States,

you wouldn't know it because of the media because they don't pay attention to us,

There are millions of people in this nation who call on the name of the Lord to maintain this nation.

And God can do this despite whomever holds the office of President

God can work over, under and around any individual regardless of their political philosophy

I take great comfort in this because in my own life, only a God who perseveres in love and mercy could continue loving me as I drift in and out of love with Him, sometimes all in the same day.

My confidence in my salvation is not based on my love for God, it is based on His persevering mercy towards me.

What does the song say, "My hope is built on nothing less, Than Jesus Christ, my righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name."

My hope is not built on how strong I am or faithful I am.

My hope is in His mercy, thank God for His mercy, Jesus Christ.

**Slide** -Romans 7: 24-25 "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

There are days when I get it right;

there are stretches where my love perseveres through the temptations and obstacles and weak flesh.

This feels good and it is a high point spiritually for me.

**Slide** -But Paul says in Ephesians 1:4 "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love"

God's love and mercy for me was present before the creation of the world and

He has and will persevere in it, despite the ups and downs of my love, until and beyond the end of time.

The third example;

### **3. Slide -God Perseveres in Sanctification**

The process of sanctification, we have learned in the book of Romans and Hebrews,

**Slide** -Sanctification is the process where God, through the cross of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, through His inspired word,

through the ministry of the church, through His providential care,

God through these agencies helps each Christian grow and mature in Christ.

God is relentless in this process.

None is excused, no one is forgotten, no one mishandled.

Every single Christian is in the process of being matured (or sanctified) by God.

The problem is that we forget or neglect to attend to the activities and exercises (worship, study, service, prayer, fellowship) that stimulate our development, but God never does.

The preacher can only get to us in the church building so we can have a healthy spiritual workout, but God perseveres every single day and night challenging us, examining us, encouraging us to do away with sin, to grow in the Spirit, to let go the world and let more of our lives be in the control and power of Jesus Christ.

You can leave the church building and the brethren behind when you depart from here, but God perseveres in His task of remaking you into the image of His Son wherever you go, He is there.

#### Summary

You know some people will always wonder what's my life about, what God's plan for my life?

Well I have the answer, here's God's plan for your life, my life everybody's life

For those who are not Christians, God's plan for them, that they believe Jesus Christ.

Not that they become super stars, not that they win America's got talent, not that they get a gold medal.

God's plan for their life is that they become Christians.

You know sometimes people are in an accident and they have a close call with death

Then they begin to think God must have a plan for me, what is it?

The plan is you believe in Jesus, that's the plan.

And then I hear Christians say what's God's plan for me?

His plan for you is that you become sanctified in the image of His Son Jesus Christ, that His plan for you.

Now while that is being worked out, if you want to be an accountant, that's OK.

If you want to be a great fisherman, that's fine, God's plan is still the same for you.

That you be a sanctified fisherman or accountant.

People usually think well God's plan involves those who want to go into ministry, well that is His plan for some people

But ministers like everybody else, they are in the process of sanctification,

That's what God's plan for me that I be sanctified, why would it be any different?

It is a good thing that God perseveres, because if He did not,

we would be like those astronauts in the movies who accidentally cut themselves off from the space ship and drift away into endless space.

We do that to ourselves with sin and ignorance and neglect.

We cut ourselves off from a loving God and we slowly drift into the blackness of hell.

But thankfully God perseveres:

In Judgement: To remind us to stay close.

In mercy: To reattach us to Himself through His love whenever we begin to drift away and reach out for rescue and safety.

In Sanctification: Not letting us remain as we were but transforming us each day into a new creation ready for an eternal life with Him through Christ in heaven.

Where are we going? Where is God's plan leading me? It's leading me to heaven.

And any road we happen to take that is leading me away from heaven is the wrong road

This will never stop, the God of heaven will always persevere in these until all is complete.

The question today is, "How have we responded to His pursuit of us in these ways?"

Have we prepared for the judgement to come by believing in Jesus and dying with Him in baptism?

Because that is what His plan is for us I, if we are not a Christian.

Have we responded to his mercy by showing mercy to others?

Have we submitted to His efforts to rid us of our worldly habits and desires and focus our attention to and love for Christ?

If we have, then take courage because no matter what, God will persevere with us until everything in us is perfected.

If we have not, then know that God perseveres in calling us again, through this lesson and invitation to come to Him now as we stand and sing our song of encouragement.

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