



THE Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. (Jer 31:3)

I will begin this devotion with a story:

The BEE has been aptly described as busy. To produce one pound of honey, the bee must visit 56,000 clover heads. Since each head has 60 flower tubes, a total of 3,360,000 visits are necessary to give us a pound of honey for the breakfast table. Meanwhile, that worker bee has flown the equivalent of three times around the world!

To produce one tablespoon of honey for our toast, the little bee makes 4,200 trips to flowers. He makes about ten trips a day to the fields, each trip lasting twenty minutes average and four hundred flowers. A worker bee will fly as far as eight miles if he cannot find a nectar flow that is nearer.

Therefore, when you feel that persistence is a difficult task, think of the bee.

As Confucius has said, the journey of 1,000 miles begins with the first step; but I would remind you that the journey of 1,000 miles is not completed, either, until the last step is taken. Perseverance is a Godly virtue which God has inculcated into the natural world. A river is a river because it maintains a constant and continuous flow. The sun, too, never ceases to rise and set else we would all be either crispy critters, or frozen statues.

All of the natural characteristics of the Elect of God are bound up in a union of such characteristics. Justification, Sanctification, Perseverance, etc, are all ancillary to one another. There must be a progression in life and faith, else there is a digression thereof.

The biblical doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints is alluded to both overtly as well as contextually throughout Scripture. It means to continue upon the path of faith and loyalty to the end. *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.* (Matt 10:22)

The Westminster Confession defines Perseverance in these words:

I. *They, whom God has accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.*

II. *This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which arises also the certainty and infallibility thereof.*

III. Nevertheless, they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and, for a time, continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.

I have witnessed many who seemed the most devout of Christians turn away during times of trouble, or of plenty, and reject the faith they once confessed. But in every case, I do not believe such men were saved to begin with. If we truly love our mothers and fathers, will we at last reject them over a frivolous change of heart? If we truly love the One who bled and died for us, will we turn away from the cross at the last minute?

If the sheep belong to the Shepherd, they will recognize His Voice even at the first utterance: *27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.* (John 10:27-29) Once in the Shepherd's Hand, nothing or no one can drag them away. They exist in perfect and eternal security. *29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. (Romans 11:29) That which is yet unborn has no conscious thought of what it shall be at birth: Blessed be 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, 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* (1 Peter 1:3-5)

The Elect of God shall not be deceived owing to the intervention of the Holy Ghost before that can happen: *22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. 23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.* (Matt 24:22-24)

Having known us from before the foundation of the world, would God's foreordained omniscience fail to know us even when we were on the dark road of sin and

ignorance? *48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* (Acts 13:48)

Please observe the four-fold nature of God's election (remember it is God's election, not man's):

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)

Once we have taken a responsibility upon ourselves, we are obligated to satisfy that obligation. This is not only true in religion, in military service, in medicine, but also in contractual obligations before the law. We are not relieved from the obligations of a legal contract simply by claiming a loss of interest. We would lose more than interest in such an approach.

Our perseverance is an act of the constraining influences of the Holy Ghost. Our good works along the way are not our own, but belong to the One who works in, and through, us. So what works can we lay claim to? Only those which are not pleasing to God – those are our own! *38 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: 39 And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: 40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.* (Jer 32:38-40) The fear given is the work of the Lord, and that fear binds us to His will.

Did we ever love the Lord before He first loved us? No, we could not – it was an act of the Lord and not of the chosen: *19 We love him, because he first loved us.* (1 John 4:19) Did we place ourselves in the Hand of the Lord, or was that the work of the Father? *2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. 4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. 5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. 6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.* (John 17:1-6)

Persevering means never giving up on the hope that is within us. *No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.* (Luke 9:62 (KJV) Not only not giving up, but following steadfastly that Light given from above. I have never had the opportunity to plow, but when I was a lad, many farmers in my area still used mules to plow the fields. In plowing, I observed that they never looked back, but always forward. One cannot see to plow a straight row if he is looking back where he has been and not forward to where he is going.

Perseverance leads to victory. Here are the words of Winston Churchill in 1941 (in the early days of the terrible bombing of England during the Second World War): *Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense.*