

# THE HOLY SPIRIT Chapter 28 The Spirit Preserving

by A.W. Pink

---

---

## Transcript

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Chapter 28

The Spirit Preserving

During recent years much has been written upon the eternal security of the saints, some of it helpful, but most of it superficial and injurious. Many Scriptures have been quoted, but few of them explained. A great deal has been said about the fact of Divine preservation, but comparatively little on the method thereof. The preservation of the believer by the Father and by the Son has been given considerable prominence, but the work of the Spirit therein was largely ignored. The general impression conveyed to the thoughtful reader has been that, the "final perseverance" of the Christian is a mechanical thing rather than a spiritual process, that it is accomplished by physical force rather than by moral persuasion, that it is performed by external might rather than by internal means—something like an unconscious non-swimmer being rescued from a watery grave, or a fireman carrying a swooning person out of a burning building. Such illustrations are radically faulty, utterly misleading, and pernicious in their tendency. It may be objected that the principal thing for us to be concerned with is the blessed fact itself, and that there is no need for us to trouble ourselves about the *modus operandi*: let us rejoice in the truth that God does preserve His people, and not wrack our brains over how He does so. As well might the objector say the same about the redemptive work of Christ: let us be thankful that He did make an atonement, and not worry ourselves over the philosophy of it. But is it of no real importance, no value to the soul, to ascertain that Christ's atonement was a vicarious one, that it was a definite one, and not offered at random; that it is a triumphant one, securing the actual justification of all for whom it was made? Why, my reader, it is at this very point lies the dividing-line between vital truth and fundamental error. God has done something more than record in the Gospels the historical fact of Christ's death: He has supplied in the Epistles an explanation of its nature and design. So, too, God has given us far more than bald statements in His Word that none of His people shall perish: He has also revealed how He preserves them from destruction, and it is not only highly insulting to Him, but to our own great loss, if we ignore or refuse to ponder carefully what He has made known therein. Was it without reason Paul prayed, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ,

when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand" (Eph. 1:17-20). Christians are "kept by the power of God" (1 Pet. 1:5), and evidently we can only know what that power is, and the greatness thereof, as we are spiritually enlightened concerning the same. When we read that we are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5), or "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13), in such passages the immediate reference is always to the Holy Spirit—the "immediate," though not the exclusive. In the economy of redemption all is from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. All proceeds from the fore-ordination of the Father, all that comes to the believer is through Christ, that is, on account of His infinite merits: all is actually wrought by the Spirit, for He is the Executive of the Godhead, the active Agent in all the works of redemption. The believer is as truly and directly preserved by the Spirit, as he was quickened by Him; and only as this is duly recognized by us will we be inclined to render Him that thanks and praise which is His distinctive due.

**Preservation in Holiness** The chief end for which God sends the Spirit to indwell His people is to deliver them from apostasy: to preserve them not only from the everlasting burnings, but from those things which would expose them thereto. Unless that be clearly stated, we justly lay ourselves open to the charge that this is a dangerous doctrine—making light of sin and encouraging careless living. It is not true that if a man has once truly believed in Christ, no matter what enormities he may commit afterwards, nor what course of evil he follow, he cannot fail to reach Heaven. Not so is the teaching of Holy Writ. The Spirit does not preserve in a way of licentiousness, but only in the way of holiness. Nowhere has God promised His favor to dogs who go back to their vomit, nor to swine which return to their wallowing in the mire. The believer may indeed experience a fearful fall, yet he will not lie down content in his filth, any more than David did: "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with His hand" (Ps. 37:24). That many Christians have persevered in holiness to the last moment of their lives, cannot be truthfully denied. Now their perseverance must have been obtained wholly of themselves, or partly of themselves and partly by Divine aid, or it must have been wholly dependent on the purpose and power of God. None who profess to believe the Scriptures would affirm that it was due entirely to their own efforts and faithfulness, for they clearly teach that progress in holiness is as much the work of the Spirit as is the new birth itself. To say that the perseverance of the saint is due, in part to himself, is to divide the credit, afford ground for boasting, and rob God of half His rightful glory. To declare that a life of faith and holiness is entirely dependent upon the grace and power of God, is but to repeat what the Lord told His disciples: "without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5), and is to affirm with the Apostle, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5). Yet it needs to be pointed out that in maintaining His people in holiness, the power of God operates in quite another manner than it does in the maintenance of a river or the preservation of a tree. A river may (sometimes does) dry up, and a tree may be uprooted: the one is maintained by being replenished by fresh waters, the other is preserved by its being nourished and by its roots being held in the ground; but in each case, the preservation is by physical power, from without, entirely without their concurrence. In the case of the Christian's preservation it is quite otherwise. With him God works from within, using moral persuasion, leading him to a concurrence of mind and will with the Holy Spirit in this work. God deals with the believer as a moral agent, draws him "with cords of a man" (Hosea 11:4), maintains his responsibility, and bids him, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12, 13). Thus there is both preservation on God's part and perseverance in holiness on ours, and the former is accomplished by maintaining the latter. God does not deal with His people as though they were machines, but as rational creatures. He sets before them weighty considerations and powerful motives, solemn warnings and rich rewards, and by the renewings of His grace and the revivings of His Spirit causes them

to respond thereto. Are they made conscious of the power and pollution of indwelling sin? then they cry for help to resist its lustings and to escape its defilements. Are they shown the importance, the value, and the need of faith? then they beg the Lord for an increase of it. Are they made sensible of that obedience which is due unto God, but aware, too, of the hindering drag of the flesh? then they cry, "Draw me, we will run after Thee." Do they yearn to be fruitful? then they pray, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits" (Song. 4:16). His understanding having been savingly enlightened, the believer desires to grow in grace and the knowledge of his Lord, that he may abound in spiritual wisdom and good works. Every affection of his heart is stirred, every faculty of his soul called into action. And yet this concurrence is not such as to warrant us saying that his perseverance depends, in any degree on himself, for every spiritual stirring and act on his part is but the effect of the Spirit's operation within him, "He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it" (Phil. 1:6). He who first enlightened, will continue to shine upon the understanding; He who originally convicted of sin, will go on searching the conscience; He who imparted faith will nourish and sustain the same; He who drew to Christ, will continue to attract the affections toward Him.

**Regeneration and Preservation** There are two eminent benefits or spiritual blessings which comprehend all others, filling up the entire space of the Christian's life, from the moment of his quickening unto his ultimate arrival in Heaven, namely, his regeneration and his preservation. And as the renowned Puritan Thomas Goodwin says, "If a debate were admitted which of them is the greater, it would be found that no jury of mankind could determine on either side, but must leave it to God's free grace itself, which is the author and finisher of our faith, to decide." As the creating of the world at first and the upholding and governing of all things by Divine power and Providence are yoked together (Heb. 1:2, 3), so are regeneration and preservation. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24)—i.e., preserve (v. 23). "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 ... to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled ... who are kept by the power of God through faith" (1 Pet. 1:3-5). The same blessed linking together of these eminent benefits is seen in the Old Testament: "Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not He thy Father that hath bought thee? hath He not made thee and established thee?" (Deut. 32:6); "And even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made and I will bear" (Isa. 46:4); "Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved" (Ps. 66:9)—the verb has a double meaning, as the margin signifies: "putteth" at the first, and "holdeth" or maintaineth afterwards. How wonderful is this in the natural: delivered from countless dangers, preserved from epidemics and diseases which carried off thousands of our fellows, recovered from various illnesses which had otherwise proven fatal. Still more wonderful is the spiritual preservation of the saint: kept from the dominion of sin which still indwells him; kept from being drawn out of the Narrow Way by the enticements of the world; kept from the horrible heresies which ensnare multitudes on every side; kept from being entirely overcome by Satan, who ever seeks his destruction. What pleasure it now gives the Christian to hear of the varied and wondrous ways in which God regenerates His people! What delight will be ours in Heaven when we learn of the loving care, abiding faithfulness, and mighty power of God in the preservation of each of His own! What joy will be ours when we learn the details of how He made good His promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. 43:2)—His Providence working for us externally, His grace operating internally: preserving amid the tossings and tempests of life, recovering from woeful backslidings, reviving us when almost dead.

**How the Spirit Preserves** The preservation of God's people through all the vicissitudes of their pilgrim journey is accomplished, immediately, by the Holy Spirit. He it is who watches over the

believer, delivering him when he knows it not; keeping him from living in the world's sinks of iniquity, lifting up a standard when the Enemy comes like a flood against him (Isa. 59:19). He it is who keeps him from accepting those fatal heresies which deceive and destroy so many empty professors. He it is who prevents his becoming contented with a mere "letter" ministry or satisfied with head-knowledge and notional religion. And how does the Spirit accomplish the Christian's preservation? By sustaining the new nature within him, and calling it forth into exercise and action. By working such graces in him that he becomes "established" (2 Cor. 1:21). By keeping him conscious of his utter ruin and deep need of Christ. By bringing him to a concurrence with His gracious design, moving him to use appropriate means. But let us be more specific. "Teach me, O LORD, the way of Thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end" (Ps. 119:33). We lost the way of true happiness when we fell in Adam, and ever since men have wandered up and down vainly seeking rest and satisfaction: "They are all gone out of the way" (Rom. 3:12). Nor can any man discover the way of holiness and happiness of himself: he must be taught it spiritually and supernaturally by God. Such teaching is earnestly desired by the regenerate, for they have been made painfully conscious of their perversity and insufficiency: "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man" (Prov. 30:2) is their confession. It is by Divine and inward teaching that we are stirred into holy activity: "I will keep it"—that which is inwrought by the Spirit is outwrought by us. Thereby our final perseverance is accomplished: "I will keep it to the end"—because effectually taught of Jehovah. "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee" (Prov. 2:10, 11). For wisdom to enter into our hearts means that the things of God have such an influence upon us as to dominate our affections and move our wills. For knowledge to be pleasant to our souls signifies that we delight in the Law of God after the inward man (Rom. 7:22), that submission to God's will is not irksome but desirable. Now where such really be the case, the individual possesses a discernment which enables him to penetrate Satan's disguises and perceive the barb beneath the bait, and is endowed with a discretion which makes him prudent and cautious, so that he shuns those places where alluring temptations abound and avoids the company of evil men and women. Thereby is he delivered from danger and secured from making shipwreck of the faith: see also Proverbs 4:6; 6:22-24. "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. 32:40). This statement casts much light upon the means and method employed by God in the preserving of His people. The indwelling Spirit not only constrains the new nature by considerations drawn from the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14), but He also restrains the old nature by a sense of God's majesty. He often drops an awe on the believer's heart, which holds him back from running into that excess of riot which his lusts would carry him unto. The Spirit makes the soul to realize that God is not to be trifled with, and delivers from wickedly presuming upon His mercy. He stimulates a spirit of filial reverence in the saint, so that he shuns those things which would dishonor his Father. He causes us to heed such a word as, "Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee" (Rom. 11:20,21). By such means does God fulfill His promise "I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes" (Ezek. 36:27). "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Gal. 5:5). It is the stirrings of hope, however faint, which keeps the soul alive in seasons of disappointment and despondence. But for the renewings of the gracious Spirit, the believer would relinquish his hope and sink into abject despair. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert" (Isa. 35:5, 6): it is by fresh supplies of the Spirit (Phil. 1:19) that there comes not only further light, but new strength and comfort. Amid the perturbations caused by indwelling sin and the anguish from our repeated defeats, it is

one of the Spirit's greatest works to sustain the soul by the expectation of things to come. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith" (1 Pet. 1:5). Here again we are shown how the preservation of the saint is effected: through the influences of an exercised faith—compare 1 John 5:4. Now faith implies not only the knowledge and belief of the Truth, but also those pious affections and dispositions and the performance of those spiritual duties which constitute practical holiness. Without faith no man can attain unto that holiness, and without the power of God none can exercise this faith. Faith is the channel through which the mighty works of God are wrought—as Hebrews 11 so clearly shows—not the least of which is the conducting of His people safely through the Enemy's land (1 John 5:19). Perseverance in grace, or continuance in holiness, is not promoted by a blind confidence or carnal security, but by watchfulness, earnest effort and self-denial. So far from teaching that believers shall certainly reach Heaven whether or not they use the means of grace, Scripture affirms, "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13). God has not promised that, no matter how loosely a saint may live or what vile habits he may persist in, he shall not perish; but rather does He assure us that He will preserve from such looseness and wickedness as would expose him to His wrath. It is by working grace in our hearts, by calling into exercise the faculties of our souls, by exciting fear and hope, hatred and love, sorrow and joy, that the saint is preserved.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-pink/the-holy-spirit-chapter-28-the-spirit-preserving/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**