

into sin from time to time. But we have eternal life in us which God has put there. We do not persevere and push forward and win eternal life.

I looked in Oxford English Dictionary and I find there that 300 years ago the word "persevere" simply meant to continue in a particular state. You would say that every one of you if you spent 3 years here has persevered in being a student at the seminary. Some of you have persevered in your studies. Some of you are so bright you can pick them up without studying, perhaps. And some of you are lazy and never will finish the course.

Some persevere. Many do not persevere. It is a Christian duty to persevere in righteousness. A Christian duty to strive to do the will of God. But it is nowhere taught in Scripture that ~~all~~ saints will persevere. The word is an old English word.

I have persevered for 8 years in living in Hatfield. That does not mean I've been working at it for these 8 years. It merely states the fact and the perseverance of the saints as the term was used 300 years ago means that the one who has been saved by God has within him a new nature which has been produced by the grace of God and God's grace once it begins working in a man will continue to work in him.

Some today would try to change it to the preservation of the saints. One book I was looking at recently said the preservation of the saints== the perseverance of the saints by which I mean the perseverance of God in keeping these saints! Well that's not the way we use the word today.

It's important that we recognize that Christianity is not a teaching in which God is keeping a balance sheet and in which sin is to be paid for. All humanity has fallen into such sin that it deserves the wrath and curse of God, and still much of that sin is within us after we are saved.

Though if we are truly persevering in our Christian life, God is sanctifying us little by little and cleansing us from our sin. The grace of God means that God has implanted a new life within us, and this new life of grace in the soul will continue through all eternity.

The Reformed Faith then --these particular aspects that I touched upon this morning -- is the complete fore determination of God of everything that happens. Yet not thereby destroying the liberty and the contingency of second causes.

And the fact that what happens to the Christian is not a balance sheet and the weighing of goodness and good deeds, but the introduction of a new life into men, a life that continues through all eternity.

So the grace of God is vital center of the teaching of the Scripture. Not the goodness of any of us, but the grace of God who has chosen to save us. It was no goodness of yours that you happened to be born in America rather than in the middle of China