

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 041

2 Timothy 4:10

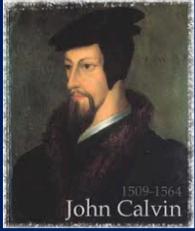
September 7, 2025

Dr. Andy Woods

Well, let's open our Bibles to 1 Corinthians 3:15. We are continuing with our teaching that we have been doing, "Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible."

Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible

- I. Calvinism's Mixed Blessing
- II. Why Critique Calvinism?
- III. The Source of Calvin's Theology
- IV. Calvin's Manner of Life
- V. **TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture**
- VI. Conclusion



A portrait of John Calvin, a French theologian, pastor, and reformer. The portrait shows him from the chest up, wearing a dark cap and a dark robe. Below the portrait, the text "1509-1564" and "John Calvin" is visible.

We are at a place in the study when we are taking the pneumonic device TULIP, which is the Calvinistic acronym.

V. Running **TULIP** Through the Grid of Scripture

- A. **T**otal Depravity
- B. **U**nconditional Election
- C. **L**imited Atonement
- D. **I**rresistible Grace
- E. **P**erseverance of the Saints



A graphic of a tulip flower with a red stem and green leaves. Below the flower, the acronym TULIP is expanded into its full meaning:

T Total Depravity
U Unconditional Election
L Limited Atonement
I Irresistible Grace
P Perseverance of the Saints

We are examining all of these things relative to Scripture, because these issues here are not the issue. The issue is the Bible. So this is what you do with any teaching.

We are at the "P," Perseverance of the Saints, which is defined by Calvinism differently from the way we teach it here. We teach that it means that God preserves us. Peter tells us that we are destined for an imperishable inheritance in 1 Peter 1:4. And how do I know I am going to get the inheritance? Because I am currently being "*protected by the power of God*" (1 Peter 1:5).

Peter does not say, "Your ability to enter glory is based on some kind of works that you do," which would place the onus on you. But your protection by God places the onus on God (1 Peter 1:4-5). So if that were all Calvinism meant by "P," the Perseverance of the Saints, and they defined it as the "preservation of the saints," I would have no problem with it.

But when you get into the teachings of Neo-Calvinism, you start to see that the preservation of the saints is not what they mean. Bob Kirkland summarizes their view as follows.

"'P' stands for 'Perseverance of the Saints.' This is what Calvinists say gives them the assurance of eternal security, but in actuality 'the emphasis is upon the believer's faithfulness in persevering—not upon God's keeping power...'"¹

And if you believe this, the way the Calvinists teach it, what is the end result? Well, you could never have the assurance of your salvation. You could never be assured because you do not know if you are really doing enough good works, or if enough good works are showing up in your life (because it is not something that can be objectively quantified) to demonstrate that you are one of the elect.

So Kirkland writes,

"...uncertainty as to one's ultimate salvation is, in fact, built into the very fabric of Calvinism itself."²

And Calvinists do teach this. Do all of them teach it? Maybe not. But that is a general thrust of their teaching.

This quote of Calvin comes from the book "Calvin's Calvinism: God's Eternal Predestination and Secret Providence." Calvin said,

"[T]hose who do not persevere unto the end belong not to the calling of God."³

¹ Bob Kirkland, *Calvinism: None Dare Call It Heresy; Spotlight on the Life and Teachings of John Calvin* (Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails, 2018), 34.

² Ibid.

³ John Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism: God's Eternal Predestination and Secret Providence* (Reformed Free Publishing Association, Kindle edition from the 2009 2nd edition), Kindle location 532.

So I hope your life ends on a good note spiritually, because if you go out of this world with doubts or in a backslidden state, then maybe you were not one of the elect. See that?

So that is what Calvinists mean by the Perseverance of the Saints, whereas we are teaching that once you are in Christ, you are born, and nothing can undo that. Whether you grow as a Christian greatly or not so greatly, that issue—growth, or lack thereof, as a Christian—has nothing to do with whether you are going to arrive in glory. Growth may have something to do with your rewards at the Bema Seat that you could potentially receive. But your Christian growth has nothing to do with whether you are going to get to heaven or not.

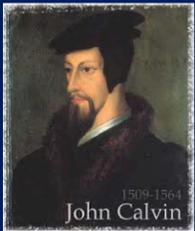
Perseverance of the Saints is a very different teaching from the "preservation of the saints." The preservation of the saints is eternal security. The Perseverance of the Saints is "The jury's out on you, and data needs to be collected by some kind of heavenly court.

"And if the good outweighs the bad—if there is evidence that you really are a child of God—then you are declared to be elect and justified, at the end of salvation, not at the beginning."

Calvinists call this "final salvation." We have been working through the problems with how the Calvinists are defining Perseverance of the Saints.

E. Perseverance of the Saints

1. Calvinistic definition
2. Examples
3. Problems with the Calvinistic understanding



1509-1564
John Calvin

This is the outline that we have been following. Once we finish this outline, we will be finished with our study on Calvinism. But I have to warn you, there is a lot coming here under Perseverance of the Saints.

So the question is, can you all persevere through this teaching on the Perseverance of the Saints? Because this is a big deal. How you think about this is going to determine whether you are going to walk in joy, or whether you are going to walk with an attitude of introspection, with uncertainty as to whether you are going to heaven or not. And if

you are doing the latter, it is going to inhibit your ability to be all that God has called you to be here on Earth. This assurance of salvation—you have to get this one down.

Of all the doctrines in the Bible, get the doctrine of assurance of salvation down, because that will largely shape your emotional and mental makeup and your spiritual fruitfulness. You cannot be fruitful for God if you are worried all the time about whether you are His child. But if you know you are God's child, boy, that sure emancipates you. And it gives you an incentive to serve God, not out of fear that, "Oh, maybe I am not His child," but because you cannot believe what you have in grace. The natural reaction is to just give yourself completely to the Lord.

We talked about subletter "a," that final salvation, as Calvinists use that expression, is just unbiblical. And then we move to "b," where we have scriptural examples of non-persevering saints.

Now, do not get me wrong: just because we teach that some saints do not persevere in good works and doctrine, does not mean that we are not saying to imitate those people, right? You want to leave this world in an upward trajectory, not being sinless, but sinning less. Paul left this world that way when he said, "I have finished the course, I have completed the race, I have fought the good fight" (paraphrase, 2 Timothy 4:7).

That is how you want to leave this world—looking back on your life in Christ with no major regrets. We all have some regrets to a certain extent, but you do not want to look back with major regrets. But if you do look back with major regrets, it does not inhibit your arrival in heaven.

There is example after example after example in the Old Testament (which we have worked through) of many people who were clearly saved, but did not persevere at the end of their life.

In fact, if you looked at the end of their lives, you would wonder, "Were they really a believer at all?" But the Bible clearly indicates that they were believers.

3. Problems with the Calvinistic Perseverance Definition

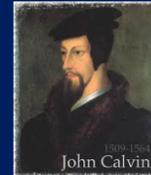
- a) Final salvation is unbiblical
- b) Scriptural examples of non-persevering saints
- c) Support only found in out of context verses
- d) Subtle form of works salvation
- e) Preferability of immediate death following conversion?
- f) Lessens the importance of practical sanctification
- g) Lessens the importance of the Bema Seat warnings
- h) Destroys the assurance of salvation



We looked at seven examples. Now, people like to throw out the Old Testament these days. I guess God just gave us twenty-seven books instead of the thirty-nine plus the twenty-seven.

Examples of Old Testament Non-Persevering Saints

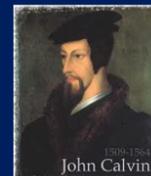
1. Noah (Gen. 9:20-23; Heb. 11:7)
2. Lot (Gen. 13; 19; 2 Pet. 2:7-8)
3. Moses (Num. 20:11-12; Deut. 32:5; Matt. 17:1-3; Heb. 11:23-29; Rev. 11:6)
4. Exodus' generation (Num. 13-14; Heb. 11:29)
5. Samson (Judges 13-16; Heb. 11:32)
6. Saul (1 Sam. 28; 31)
7. Solomon (1 Kgs. 11:4, 9-10)



And people say, "Ah, that is just the Old Testament," as if you can just write it off, you know. So to comfort those people, I have ten examples from the New Testament of non-persevering believers.

Examples of New Testament Non-Persevering Saints

1. Untrustworthy believers (John 2:23-25)
2. Non-confessing believers (John 12:42)
3. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)
4. Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:13)
5. Immature believers at Corinth (1 Cor. 3:1-3)
6. **Unrewarded believers at Corinth (1 Cor. 3:15)**
7. Disciplined believers at Corinth (1 Cor. 11:27-32)
8. Demas (2 Tim. 4:10; Col. 4:14)
9. Immature believers in Hebrews (Heb. 5:11-14)
10. Seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 3:19)



We have looked at the untrustworthy believers of John 2, the non-confessing believers of John 12, Ananias and Sapphira of Acts 5, and Simon the sorcerer of Acts 8. Last time we looked at the immature believers at Corinth (1 Corinthians 3). None of these people were persevering in good works and doctrine. Yet we have been trying to demonstrate that they were all justified before God and heaven-bound.

We left off there with number six, which to me is probably the strongest verse you have in Scripture coming against the Calvinistic understanding of the Perseverance of the

Saints: 1 Corinthians 3:15. First Corinthians 3:15 is written to the most carnal church of the first century, of which we have record.

I was driving and I saw a church sign that said, "We are a first century church." And I thought, "I hope it is not Corinth, or Laodicea, or something like that."

The Corinthians were a group of people that were saved, as I have been trying to show you, but they were not persevering. And it is not as if Paul says to them, "Maybe you are not going to go to heaven." He never says that. What he says is, "You are going to be unrewarded at the Bema Seat Judgment" (1 Corinthians 3:15, paraphrase).

In this verse, Paul opens the door to the existence of an unrewarded believer. He starts talking about how, at this Bema Seat Judgment, our works are going to pass through a fire (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). We ourselves will not go through the fire, but our works will pass through the fire to ascertain their quality. Those things that we have done under God's power, through proper motives are gold, silver, and costly stones, which are noncombustible (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). A fire cannot destroy those precious works, but it can refine them so they pass through the fire and they are not consumed.

But there are other things that we do, as Christians, that are carnal and selfish and done under our own power for some sort of sinful motivation (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). Those carnal works are going to pass through the fire. They are called wood, hay, and stubble. What the works have in common with wood, hay, and stubble is that they are, like wood, hay, and stubble, all combustible, and they are going to pass through the fire and be consumed (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

And the fire is objective, right? It is not as though the fire can show favoritism. Things that are combustible, the fire burns. Things that are noncombustible, the fire cannot burn. Whatever is left, after the fire finishes its job, is some kind of reward that some believers will receive, above and beyond salvation (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

Since this judgment is coming, Paul says to the Corinthians, "Be careful how you build" (1 Corinthians 3:10, paraphrase). He says that very clearly in this chapter (1 Corinthians 3) and in this book (1 Corinthians). In other words, "You are on the right foundation of Christ, but you are building on that foundation by your Christian life. "Be careful how you build, because that is going to come to light one day. And that is not a heaven or hell issue. That is a rewarded-unrewarded issue" (1 Corinthians 3:10-15, paraphrase).

And as Paul is talking about this to this very carnal group of people who were saved, but carnal, he opens the door to the existence of a non-persevering believer.

Paul is not approving of a non-persevering believer. He is saying that it is an unfortunate possibility. You cannot warn against something that does not exist.

Paul says this:

"If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss;..." (1 Corinthians 3:15).

And you can see the imagery there: suffering loss. We can identify with that—a financial downturn, a health downturn—in life. We know what losses are like.

What Paul is saying is, "As your works are going to go through the fire, and ascertained to be wood, hay, and stubble, they are going to be destroyed by the fire and you are going to suffer loss" (1 Corinthians 3:12-15, paraphrase).

But notice what else Paul says here,

"...but he himself [that is the carnal Christian] will be saved,..." (1 Corinthians 3:15).

So when Paul uses this expression "loss," and he connects it to people who are saved, he is talking about a non-persevering believer. And Paul is not saying that this is a good place to be in. He is saying that "This is a possibility, and you Corinthians need to avoid this.

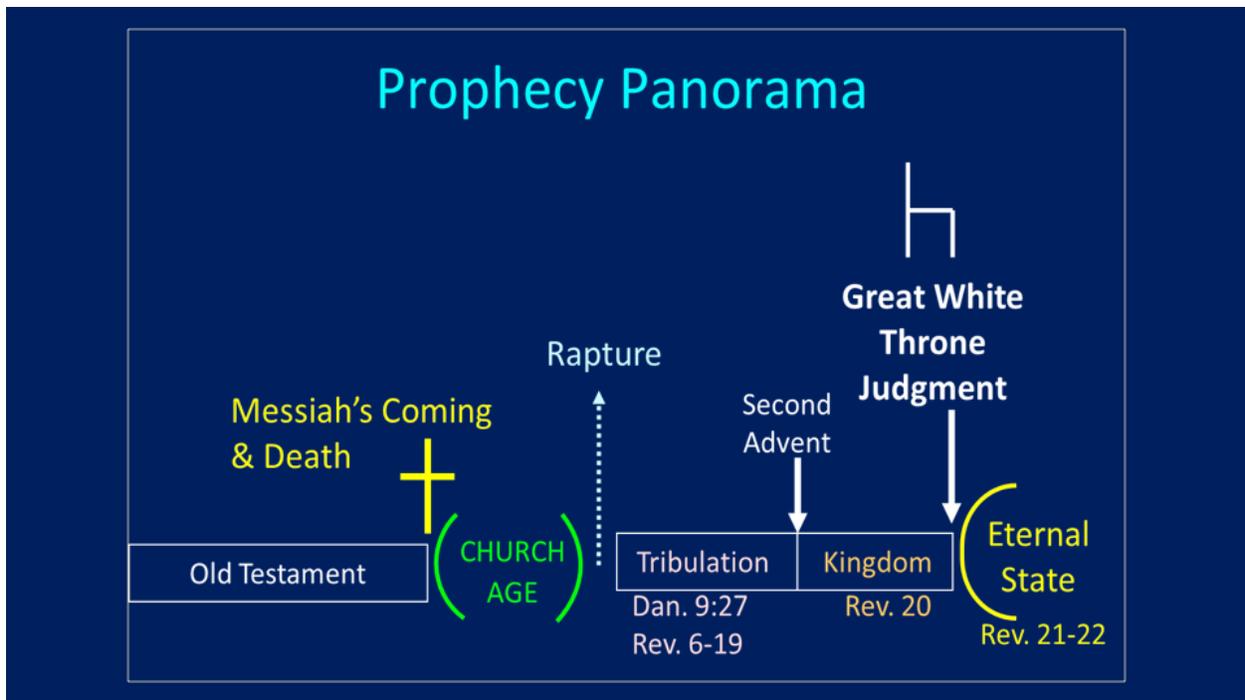
"You need to understand that the choices you are making as a Christian are going to have an eternal impact that is unrelated to whether you go to heaven or to hell."

So a verse like that, to me, takes the current Calvinistic understanding of the Perseverance of the Saints and just destroys it. Calvinists do not think that an elect person can come up like this in heaven. They would just say, "Ah, this person's not saved, because they do not have enough fruit in their life to demonstrate that they are one of the elect."

But, read the verse yourself. It clearly says,

"...but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15).

It is that tragic situation in which someone is in heaven—praise God for that! They are not in hell. But they smell the smoke on their garment, so to speak, and they look back on their Christian life with a lot of regrets. And Paul says, "You do not want to end up like that. Be careful how you build" (1 Corinthians 3:10-15, paraphrase).



So when is all of this going to happen? It is going to happen at something called the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ. It is an event that will take place in heaven in the Father's house, post-Rapture. We will be in the Father's house for at least seven years before we return with Jesus at the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period to rule and reign under His delegated authority.

People ask, "Well, what are we going to be doing for seven years?" Well, the first order of business is this Bema Seat Judgment, which is not a judgment for the unbeliever. It is a judgment for the believer.

And it is not something you can opt out of, because Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:10, to the carnal Corinthian Christians,—and all Christians—

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,..." (2 Corinthians 5:10).

So, if you know that a test is in your future, you shape your life now accordingly, right? It is just like being in school. If you know an exam is coming, you had better get ready. And if you are ready, taking the exam is a joy, in a way, believe it or not. The person who is terrorized by the thought of an exam is the person who has been slacking off all semester—not that any of you people in here ever did that, you know. Certainly I never did that. And now I am committing a sin right there: I am lying about it.

So this Bema Seat Judgment is coming. It is like a performance appraisal at work or, you know, an audit is coming over your business. You say, "Okay, this is coming. I cannot get out of it. So what I can do is alter my behavior "in the nasty now and now," so to speak.

So this particular judgment that we are dealing with here is the one that we have highlighted in yellow. That is the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ.

It is not the Sheep and Goat Judgment, which takes place on the earth for the Tribulation Period survivors who are Gentiles, to determine if they are believers or unbelievers. Unbelievers are cast off the earth into Hades. If they are believers, they will enter the Millennial Kingdom in their mortal bodies and repopulate the earth.

So we are not dealing with the Sheep and Goat Judgment. There is a parallel judgment of the Jews, Ezekiel 20, which is exactly the same as the Sheep and Goat Judgment, but it is for believing and unbelieving Jewish survivors of the Tribulation Period. Jewish believers who survived the Tribulation will pass under a rod. Unbelievers will be cast off the earth into Hades, and Jewish believers in mortal bodies will go into the thousand-year Kingdom and they will repopulate the earth.

So when we talk about the Bema Seat Judgment, do not go to Matthew 25. That is not your judgment. Do not go to Ezekiel 20. That is not your judgment either. And do not go to Revelation 20:11-15, because that is not your judgment either. Revelation 20:11-15 is at the end of the thousand-year Kingdom. The judgment found in Revelation 20:11-15 is the Great White Throne Judgment.

The Great White Throne Judgment is a judgment only for unsaved people of all ages. As their name is not found written in the Lamb's Book of Life, they are cast into the lake of fire, where Satan was just thrown (Revelation 20:10), and where the beast and the false prophet are. (They were put in there at least a thousand years earlier.)

So the Great White Throne Judgment is a terrifying judgment of unbelievers, being resurrected—they are in resurrected bodies. They are standing before the Lord, and their name is not found written in the Lamb's Book of Life. And based on that, we know that they are going into the lake of fire. We just do not know the degree of punishment that unbelievers will have in the lake of fire, in a resurrected body, forever. That determination of the unbeliever's degree of punishment is made by what is in the books, which, I think, is a record of sins.

Not all sins are equal. Sin is sin. All sin separates us from God. But some sin brings a greater price tag than others.

If you think about committing murder—that thought is a sin. Jesus said that in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21-22). If you go out and commit murder, that is a bigger problem, because now you have to go to jail for that. You do not go to jail by thinking about killing someone. But both are sins. Yet they bring different price tags. So that is what is determined at the end, the Great White Throne judgment. As people's names are not found written in the book—they are not in the Book of Life—they are judged by the books.

That is why in Luke 10 Jesus said to the disciples, who were saying, "Lord, even the demons submit to us," "Do not rejoice that the demons submit to you. Rejoice that your name is recorded in heaven" (Luke 10:17-20, paraphrase). That is what Jesus said. So I am not going to have any part of the Great White Throne Judgment, and you will not

either. I am not even sure if we are around to even see it. There is no data one way or the other: whether or not we will witness it. I personally do not want to see it, but it is a biblical reality, and that becomes the impetus for evangelism. That is why we support missionaries at our church. It is why we are doing the county fair evangelism. And that is why we give the gospel here every single week, because we do not want people to end up at the Great White Throne Judgment.

So Matthew 25 is not your judgment. Ezekiel 20 is not your judgment. Revelation 20 is not your judgment. All Scripture is for us, but not all Scripture is about us, right? There are a lot of people who want to see themselves in everything, because it is all about me, right? Me, myself and I. I call that "narcigesis," instead of "exegesis."

People want to know, "Where do I fit in Matthew 25?" Well, you do not, if you are a Church Age believer. Now, if you want to not trust Christ and go into the Tribulation Period, best wishes to you. Maybe you will show up in Matthew 25 if your head is not cut off by the beast. I guess you can get to Matthew 25 that way.

But if you are a Church Age believer, Matthew 25 is not talking about you. Neither is Ezekiel 20. And if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, neither is Revelation 20.

But the Bema Seat Judgment is yours. That is your future, as a believer in Christ Jesus. At the Bema Seat Judgment our works will be taken through a fire to ascertain reward. The fire is neutral. It is an equal opportunity burner—let's just put it that way. And only a fire can determine whether the works are gold, silver, and costly stones; or wood, hay, and stubble.

Now, what you will find in Neo-Calvinism is that they have no concept of what I just said. They take all the judgments and they use what I call the "ram, jam, and cram" method, and they merge them all together. So if you listen to Calvinists talk, that is why they do not have any distinction between the Sheep and Goat, Bema Seat, and Great White Throne judgments.

First of all, when you use the "ram, jam, and cram" method, you have to get rid of all the details that make these judgments separate. The reason that these judgments are separate is that they are described differently. This chart shows you their different descriptions.

Scripture's Four Judgments				
Name	Sheep and Goat	Judgment of the Jews	Bema Seat	Great White Throne
Scripture	Matt 25:31-46	Ezek 20:33-44	1 Cor 3:10-15	Rev 20:11-15
Place	Earth, Jerusalem	Earth, wilderness	Heaven	Earth
Audience	Gentile Tribulation survivors	Jewish Tribulation survivors	Church Age believers	All unsaved
When	After Tribulation	After Tribulation	After rapture	After Millennium
Purpose	Saved Gentiles enter kingdom	Saved Jews enter kingdom	Reward believers	Degree of punishment in hell
Evaluation	Treatment of Christ's brethren	Passing under shepherd's rod	Works taken through fire	Not in the book; judged by books

But if you are not committed to the consistent, literal, grammatical, historical method of interpretation, and you just see the word "judgment," and you make every judgment all one and the same, then what you do is jam them all together. A single judgment fits the Calvinists' doctrine of final salvation, because people are going to show up at only one judgment, which I think that they think is the Great White Throne.

The Calvinists just merge all of this into the Great White Throne Judgment. And there, if your good works prove that you are one of the elect, then you get final justification. If your good works are not enough to prove you are one of the elect, then you do not get final justification. So Calvinists do not have a concept of saved people being either rewarded or unrewarded.

That would violate the Perseverance of the Saints. So that negatively influences their eschatology. They take all these judgments and they make it just one.

So if you talk to a lot of these Neo-Calvinists, and you mention the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ, they would either not know what you are talking about or just reject it outright.

Dr. Robert Congdon wrote a very neutral book, "How Calvinism Serves Satan's Purposes." "Gee, Rob, how do you really feel?" This is why I went and bought it—I like that title.

In his analysis of Neo-Calvinism, Congdon says,

"Most new Calvinists do not believe that Christ will return and reign on this earth for one thousand years..."⁴

So a lot of Calvinists are moving into Amillennialism.

"...nor do they understand that those of the church age will return to rule with Him [Jesus] following a review time before His judgment seat or bema seat when our roles and responsibilities will be determined."⁵

So there will be differing degrees, not only of reward in heaven, but differing degrees of authority on the earth, because we are coming back with Jesus, right? We, the church, will be married to Christ. And where the husband goes, the wife goes—for better or for worse, right?

So our destiny is to come back to the earth, ruling and reigning over this population of mortals that has repopulated the earth, survivors of the Great Tribulation Period. According to Luke 19, the parable of the minas (Luke 19:11-27), some are given ten cities, one is given five cities, etc. Why isn't it all equal?

Well, because the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ determined not just rewards in heaven, but roles in the Kingdom.

So God is going to reward the faithful believer with more authority than he is going to reward the unfaithful believer with, even though both are believers.

Congdon says,

"Most Calvinists believe the Great White Throne judgment is for everyone of all ages and it will determine whether one is truly saved or not."⁶

So what the Calvinists have done is taken all four judgments and just merged them all together. According to them, there is just some giant judgment at the end and that determines final salvation. So every judgment is the Great White Throne Judgment, even though clearly the Bible teaches four different judgments. So when you point this out to them, you get this big lecture about, "Well, you just take prophecy too literally."

Well, shoot me then, I guess. I take Bible prophecy literally, because all of the First Coming prophecies, about 109 of them, happened literally, didn't they?

When Micah said, "Jesus is going to be born in Bethlehem" (Micah 5:2, paraphrase), He was not born in Las Vegas or somewhere. He was born in Bethlehem, just like Micah said.

⁴ Robert R. Congdon, *How Calvinism Serves Satan's Purposes* (Greer, SC: Congdon Ministries International, 2014), 29.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

What happened when Isaiah (53:5) and the Psalms (22:16) and Zechariah (12:10) said, centuries in advance, that Jesus would be pierced? That is what happened (John 19:34, 37).

So you cannot do this switching horses in midstream and say, "Well, the First Coming prophecies were literally fulfilled, but the rest of them, it is anybody's guess."

And yet this is what people do constantly with Bible prophecy. That is why when we talk about the literal, grammatical, historical, contextual method of interpretation.

We have to add another important word to that word salad: the word "consistent." Are you employing the literal method of interpretation consistently through the whole Bible? Now you throw in the word "consistent," and you will watch pastors and seminaries back off, because they are literal in Romans, and John's Gospel, and things like that.

But when it comes to Genesis 1-11, "Oh, no way. We cannot be literal there, because we would be going against Charles Darwin." Well, what about prophecy? "Well, we cannot be literal there either." I guess my question is, if you start taking liberties with the Word of God in prophecy or in the doctrine of beginnings, you could do it anywhere, couldn't you?

But to get their system to work and stay orthodox, the Calvinists have to be inconsistently literal. You are in a church that believes in these four judgments. We do not believe them because we want to believe in them, but because they are the product of taking the literal method of interpretation that we use anywhere else in the Bible.

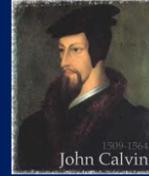
And we have applied that method to prophecy. The New Calvinists, or Neo-Calvinists, do not do that. They believe in one major judgment at the end.

Theology is a lot like a seamless garment. Whatever you are doing in one section of Scripture is going to have an impact, positive or negative, on another impact area of Scripture. And because you are dealing with a perverted soteriology in Neo-Calvinism, it also shows up in a perverted eschatology. Eschatology is the study of the end. Soteriology is the doctrine of salvation.

Show me what you are doing in eschatology, and I will be able to figure out where you are going to land on the map in soteriology.

Examples of New Testament Non-Persevering Saints

1. Untrustworthy believers (John 2:23-25)
2. Non-confessing believers (John 12:42)
3. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)
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6. Unrewarded believers at Corinth (1 Cor. 3:15)
7. **Disciplined believers at Corinth (1 Cor. 11:27-32)**
8. Demas (2 Tim. 4:10; Col. 4:14)
9. Immature believers in Hebrews (Heb. 5:11-14)
10. Seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 3:19)



The point is, number six there, you have these unrewarded believers. Let me give you here number seven. Let's go over to 1 Corinthians 11:27-32, another example of non-persevering saints.

Paul the Apostle says this:

"Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. [That is a euphemism: a polite way of saying 'death.'] But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:27-32).

Hey, this is a Communion Sunday, isn't it? How is that for a nice warm, fuzzy verse for Communion Sunday?

This passage is typically misunderstood as, "You need to confess every single sin you have ever committed before you partake of the Lord's Table, or else God is going to strike you dead." That always made me nervous, because maybe there are sins I have not confessed yet that I cannot even remember I committed, right?

Well, this whole thing is cleared up when you see the word "*manner*" (1 Corinthians 11:27). The passage is dealing with the manner in which the Corinthians were partaking of the Lord's Table. You could translate "in an unworthy manner" as "unworthily."

"Unworthily" is an adverb. An adverb modifies a verb, and typically ends in "-ly." "Joe ran." Well, how did Joe run? We have adverbs to describe it. "He ran quickly." "He ran slowly." The adverb ("quickly" or "slowly") is modifying the verb "ran."

That is what is happening here in 1 Corinthians 11. "In an unworthy manner" (1 Corinthians 11:27) is describing an action: eating the bread or drinking the cup of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:27).

Paul is telling the Corinthians to "Consider your manner carefully." Paul is upset about how the Corinthians were partaking at the Lord's Table at that given point in time. The Corinthians were reckless. They had turned the Lord's Supper into a common meal. They had turned it into a "pay to play" situation, where if you wanted to partake of the Lord's Table, you had better have money.

This excluded the poor and put an artificial barrier in the body of Christ. When you look at this whole chapter (1 Corinthians 11), you will discover that the Corinthians were taking the Lord's Supper in an inebriated state. They were drunk. They were taking something that was sacred and turning it into something profane. And Paul says that it is for this reason that God moved into Corinth with maximum divine discipline.

God brought some of those people—who I think were believers, because they are in church taking Communion—to the point of death.

And Paul says,

"For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep" (1 Corinthians 11:30).

Paul is saying, "You are experiencing this divine discipline because of how you are doing Communion. You are doing it in a really disrespectful way. You are taking what is sacred and you are turning it into something profane."

It is the same issue God had with Belshazzar (remember—in the Book of Daniel?) who retrieved the holy vessels from the sanctuary that Nebuchadnezzar his father had raided. And Belshazzar took those vessels, and he started pouring alcoholic beverages into those vessels. And the Babylonians had a great big party (Daniel 5:1-4). They were drunk. They took something that God said is special, and God said is sacred, and turned it into something completely and totally profane (Daniel 5:1-4).

That was when the handwriting on the wall appeared (Daniel 5:5). That was when God said, "Belshazzar, you are done. This very night the Persians are going to take over" (Daniel 5:18-28)."

And we know from the writings of Herodotus that the Persians, that night, had already diverted the Euphrates River, allowing them to go under the giant walls around Babylon. Belshazzar thought, "I am invincible." And yet, that very night, the Persians were already going under the walls, something that the Babylonians had not anticipated. Belshazzar lost the kingdom that very night, which was what the message on the handwriting on the wall indicated (Daniel 5:18-28). What precipitated all of that was taking something special—taking something holy—and using it for profane purposes.

That, in essence, is what the Corinthians were doing here (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). You will see that if you read the whole chapter. So it is not saying, "Boy, ten years ago, you forgot about a sin that you did not confess."

That is not what the passage is talking about. It is talking about what they were doing in the nasty now and now. And God was not happy with what they were doing. So He moved in, and some believers got sick and some died (1 Corinthians 11:30).

So why am I even bringing this up? The fact that some believers died while they were engaged in a profane practice shows you right there in the Bible, that not every believer finishes on a high note.

How does the Perseverance of the Saints handle this passage? This is very clear that some Christians were not persevering. In fact, if they were persevering in anything, it was sin. And God terminated those Christians' lifespans. They were in that 1 Corinthians 3:15 category: arrived in heaven, but works consumed by the fire.

So 1 Corinthians 11:27-32 becomes a very glaring example of how this Perseverance of the Saints idea just does not work.

I can show you example after example in the Scripture of some believers that did not finish well. I can also show you examples in the Old Testament teaching the same thing.

Let's go to 2 Timothy 4:10, following Paul's swan song, written at the end of his life. Paul says in 2 Timothy 4:6,

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come" (2 Timothy 4:6).

What is on Paul's mind? Well, the whole four chapters of 2 Timothy (which we have taught at this church) show you what Paul is thinking about as he is getting ready to die. Death, or the knowledge of it, really is a peculiar thing, isn't it? People really start to spill their guts when they know that death is near. That is what Paul is doing here in 2 Timothy.

The Holy Spirit is guiding Paul in what to say, and in the process he talks about this man named Demas. He says,

"for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia" (2 Timothy 4:10).

Notice this guy Demas, who was with Paul. Apparently at some point he just kind of bailed out. And why did he bail out? He bailed out of being involved with Paul's ministry, because the attractiveness of the world was just too much for him. What got on Demas's mind was worldliness.

Second Timothy 4:10 refers to "this present world." Demas loved the world. And you can cross-reference that with 1 John 2:15-17, which says,

"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world" (1 John 2:15-16).

By the way, falling in love with the world is a losing investment, because 1 John 2:17 says,

"The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:17).

So here is the world system working on the mind of a believer constantly: lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, the pride of life (1 John 2:16).

These are the same three sins, by the way, that beguiled Eve in the Book of Genesis (3:7). You will see that. You will also see the same three sins used by Satan to tempt Jesus in the wilderness in Luke 4:1-13.

(In fact, Luke inverts the order, I believe, of temptations two and three, so that the order is different from Matthew's rendition of Christ's temptation in the Judean wilderness [Matthew 4:1-11]. I am of the view that Luke changes the order around to put it in the right order, the order that is given in Genesis 3 and 1 John 2: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life [1 John 2:16].)

So Jesus was pushed to that degree also by Satan and his world system—to the furthest degree human beings ever been pushed—yet He was without sin.

These three sins—lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16)—ganged up there on Demas. And it was just too much for him. Demas did not have his armor on (Romans 13:12; Ephesians 6:11-17). His mind was not being renewed (Romans 12:2). He got sucked away from the ministry back into the world.

Jesus, of course, warns about this kind of thing in the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23). In Matthew 13:22, Jesus says,

"And the one on whom the seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word,..." (Matthew 13:22).

Now many people will make this man an unsaved person, but I think he is saved, because life begins at conception, biologically.

The seed went out—that is the preaching of the Word of God—and the crop sprang up. So there is life. This is not someone who faltered in the first tense of their salvation, justification. This is someone whom Jesus is saying could falter in the middle tense of their salvation growth. We know that birth and growth are two different things, right?

Just like in the natural world, you could have someone who is born, but is having developmental issues. And when you look at someone with developmental issues, you do not say, "Well, they do not exist," because they were born. It is not a birth issue. It is

a growth issue. That is what Jesus is talking about in the spiritual realm, as the Word of God is going to go out now, in the Inter-Advent Age which we are living in.

Matthew 13:22 says,

"And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word,..." (Matthew 13:22).

The plant sprang up. The man is born again spiritually. But something happened to him. What happened to him?

"...the worry of the world..." (Matthew 13:22).

That is the Greek word "kosmos" (κόσμος), from which we get the word "cosmopolitan." "Kosmos" (κόσμος) is the same word used in 1 John 2:15-17. It is the same word used in 2 Timothy 4:10.

"...the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word,..." (Matthew 13:22).

See that—you cannot choke something that does not exist. They choke the growth in this man and it becomes unfruitful. It does not say there was never anything there to choke. You cannot choke something that does not exist. So what is happening to this person? Is he saved, and the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life were too much for him?

He did not have his armor on. His mind was not renewed. He was not in daily fellowship with God. He was not in fellowship with God's people. He was not fulfilling New Testament commands. And he just drifted away. Yeah, you are in heaven upon death, but, boy, what a bunch of regrets.

That is what happened to Demas. Now, what you get in Neo-Calvinism is they do this all the time: they wave a wand, and they just convert people like this to unbelievers. "Demas obviously was not a believer, because if you are really one of the elect, and you really have received the gift of faith, and if regeneration precedes faith," and all of these things that the Calvinists teach, "you will persevere."

The Calvinists would say that this could never happen to somebody. So because he is not persevering, he is not saved. But Demas was saved. How do I know that Demas was saved? Because his name is mentioned in Colossians 4:14 as someone that Paul put into the ministry.

Do you think that Paul would put people into the ministry whose salvation was in doubt? "Hey, buddy, do you want to be in the ministry?" "Yeah." "Well, I am not sure if you are saved or not, so let's kind of stick you in there anyway, and let's just see how this washes out."

Could you see Paul doing something like that? That is insanity. You cannot just wave a wand because the Bible contradicts your theology, and make it sound as if Demas was not a believer.

Demas was clearly a believer. And yet what happened to him? He got pulled away. His life did not end the way it could have—in service to God.

Let's go over to Hebrews 5:11-14. We have the immature believers in the Book of Hebrews. The author of Hebrews says this:

"Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing" (Hebrews 5:11).

Now if you go back to verse ten, you can see that the author wanted to talk about Melchizedek. When was the last sermon you ever heard on Melchizedek? Is that in the Bible? Melchizedek? Who is that? This is heavier typology that is coming. And the author of Hebrews said, "I want to teach you this, but I am not sure you are up to the task because of your immaturity."

So the author expressed himself about this in Hebrews 5:11-14:

"For though by this time..." (Hebrews 5:12).

"You have been in this state of immaturity way too long." That is what the author was saying. Sucking your thumb at a young age is cute. When you are sixteen, it is not cute anymore. "You should have grown up a long time ago."

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you..." (Hebrews 5:12).

"You have to go back to kindergarten. You have to go back to the ABCs."

"...the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Hebrews 5:12).

"You do not even have the capacity to digest a heavier teaching like the Melchizedek typology."

"For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant" (Hebrews 5:13).

"You do not have teeth." You cannot have a steak unless you have teeth, right?

"But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14).

So this paragraph here shows a group of people who were not persevering in works or doctrine. The author said in Hebrews 5:12,

"For though by this time..." (Hebrews 5:12).

In other words, "You have been in this state of carnality way too long. You have been in this state of infancy way too long."

Now, what do Calvinists do with this? I do not have the quote, but I have looked this up in John MacArthur's Hebrews commentary. Do you know what he does? He waves a wand and makes these people unsaved people. "They are obviously not saved people because they are not persevering. "And the reason that they are not persevering is that they were never given the gift of faith. Regeneration did not precede faith, because they were not one of the elect."

That is what you find constantly in Calvinism: they just convert people who are saved to make them unsaved, because their being saved does not fit the Calvinistic theology.

Yet it is very clear that the audience of Hebrews was saved. How do we know that they were saved? Hebrews 5:12 says,

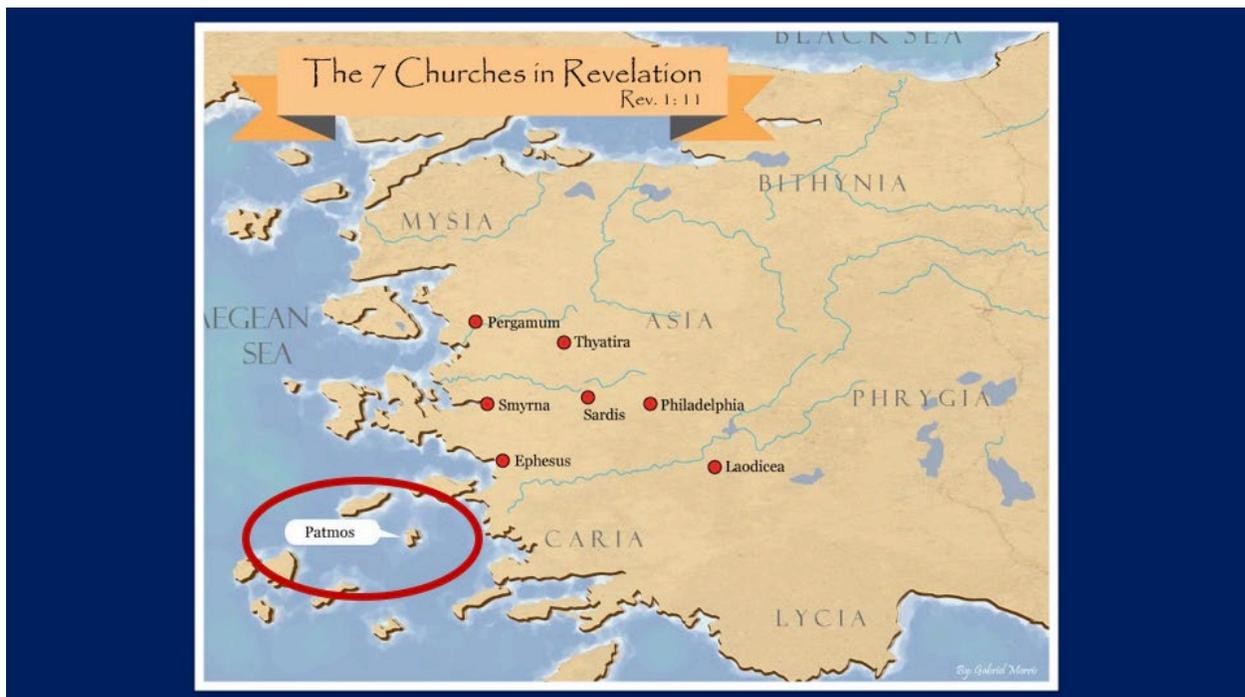
"For though by this time you ought to be teachers,..." (Hebrews 5:12).

Would the author of Hebrews ever put an unsaved person teaching a saved person? That does not make any sense either.

So it is obvious that the audience of Hebrews was saved, but they were not persevering. They were not progressing. The issue was not birth. The issue was growth.

And this is just my private list of non-persevering people. If you go through the Bible yourself, and you start studying this, you will see this very clearly.

As time permits, let me give you one more group of non-persevering people in the New Testament. That takes us to Revelation 3:19, in the context of the seven letters to the seven churches (Revelation 1:4-11, 2:1-3:22).



Five of the seven churches of Revelation were in a state of carnality. The only ones of which something negative was not said were those in Smyrna and Philadelphia (Revelation 2:8-11, 3:7-13).

What did those two groups have in common? They were under persecution by a group of people called the "synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2:9, 3:9), whom I understand to be unbelieving Jews who were persecuting these two churches.

It is rather interesting how persecution plays a role in moving us out of carnality. When you are under persecution, you have no one to depend upon but God. And that keeps us pretty close to Him, amen? When under persecution, we have a tendency to talk to Him more, to confess our sin and fellowship issues with Him more, because we need Him, since we are under persecution.

But the rest of the Revelation churches really were not under persecution to the level that we see with Smyrna and Philadelphia. So you have an example in the Scripture of five of seven churches not being persecuted. Do you know what people do with this? They wave a wand and they say, "Well, these are all unsaved churches."

The best of the best do this. I do not even want to bring up the names, because these are people I like. "We will take everybody in Laodicea, and say they are unsaved."

So let's focus on Laodicea for a minute, because Laodicea is the worst of the worst. In fact, to Laodicea, there is no word of commendation given by John on Patmos as he is receiving a vision from Jesus at the end of the first century.

For every other church John is able to muster up something good that they were doing. Laodicea was totally negative. So what do people do with Laodicea?

Well, you just convert everyone in Laodicea to an unsaved person, because after all, what does Laodicea mean?

William Newell writes,

"The name comes from 'laos,' people [as in, 'laity'], and 'dikao,' to rule:..."⁷

The name "Laodicea" literally means "the rule of the people."

"...'democracy,' in other words."⁸

What was running Laodicea was the dictates of the people, not the mandates of God. And that was all over Laodicea. That spirit, or mentality, drifted into the church. And rather than the church turning the world upside down, as the Book of Acts says they did in Acts 17. Now you have a situation in which the world is turning the church upside down.

⁷ William Newell, *The Book of the Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1935), 75.

⁸ Ibid.

And where is Jesus? As you study the letter to the Laodiceans, He is outside the door. He is knocking on the door (Revelation 3:20). So they are having church without Christ, because it is not Christ who is ruling that church. It is the people who are ruling the church, and they have a different value system from Christ. So Christ is portrayed as outside the door (Revelation 3:20).

And what does everybody do with this? Well, the Laodiceans were not saved. I am here to tell you that they were saved. I understand all the verses people quote in which Jesus says,

""...I will spit you out of My mouth"" (Revelation 3:16).

I take that as more of a statement of Jesus' nauseousness as He looks at the Laodicean church. And I understand that Jesus is outside the door (Revelation 3:20).

That is a statement of Jesus being out of fellowship with them, not that the Laodiceans never knew Him, not that they were not saved. They were out of fellowship with Him.

It is the John 15 issue. In John 15, Jesus was speaking to eleven hand-picked disciples whom we know were all saved. The only unbeliever had left the Upper Room (John 13:26-30).

Jesus talked to the eleven believing disciples about the branch and the vine. He said, "If you are in the vine, you as the branch are going to bear fruit. If you are out of the vine, you are not going to bear fruit of an eternal quality" (John 15:4-6). In fact, your fruit is going to be burned up (John 15:6). That is what happens at the Bema Seat, right? Works are burned up (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

It is a matter of being in fellowship or being out of fellowship. Jesus was not saying, "You are saved." or "You are unsaved." In John 15, He was talking to eleven people who very clearly were saved.

So that is what you have going on at Laodicea. Because the spirit of the world was governing the church, Jesus was outside the door of the church knocking to get in (Revelation 3:20). He says in that paragraph, "I want to dine with you" (Revelation 3:20, paraphrase).

Study meals and dining. They are a time of fellowship. That is why Jesus had the Last Supper with His disciples. It was a time of fellowship.

Jesus was expressing to the Laodiceans, "You are out of fellowship with Me" (Revelation 3:20, paraphrase). Now, how do I know that they were saved people? Because of Revelation 3:19, which nobody wants to quote.

Everybody wants to quote,

""...I will spit you out of My mouth"" (Revelation 3:16),

and "Jesus is outside the door of the church" (Revelation 3:20, paraphrase).

Almost nobody talks about Revelation 3:19. Yet, if you look at Revelation 3:19, you will see very clearly that the Laodiceans were saved people, because Jesus says,

""Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline;..."" (Revelation 3:19).

You do not discipline unsaved people. Hebrews 12:6 says,

"...THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES," (Hebrews 12:6).

You do not discipline the neighbor's kids. You might think about it. But don't do it. You discipline your own children.

The fact that you are under discipline demonstrates that you belong to Him (Hebrews 12:5-11).

""...therefore be zealous and repent"" (Revelation 3:19).

"Change your mind about what is happening."

So, my point in bringing this up is that of all the seven churches of Asia Minor, Laodicea was the worst church. It was like the bottom of the basement right there.

You cannot get any worse than those people. They were in a worse condition, I would say, than Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia, because it was of Laodicea that there was nothing good to say.

And yet to the worst of the worst, to the bottom of the barrel, Jesus specifically said,

""Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline;..."" (Revelation 3:19).

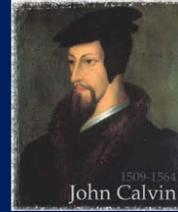
Revelation 3:19 is a verse that nobody wants to quote in this whole thing. Yet divine discipline does not apply to an unsaved person. It only applies to a saved person.

So if the Laodiceans were saved, then all the other churches were saved too, because the Laodiceans were the worst group.

So if I am right on all this, you have five of seven letters in Revelation 2-3 to non-persevering believers. That example takes us to the end of our list.

3. Problems with the Calvinistic Perseverance Definition

- a) Final salvation is unbiblical
- b) Scriptural examples of non-persevering saints
- c) **Support only found in out of context verses**
- d) Subtle form of works salvation
- e) Preferability of immediate death following conversion?
- f) Lessens the importance of practical sanctification
- g) Lessens the importance of the Bema Seat warnings
- h) Destroys the assurance of salvation



We are going to start subletter "c" next week: verses ripped out of context to support the Perseverance of the Saints teaching.