

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

SOTERIOLOGY

The Doctrine of Salvation

By Grace Alone, Through Faith Alone, In Christ Alone, To the Glory of God Alone

UNIT 9: PERSEVERANCE AND PRESERVATION — THE SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER

Those Whom God Saves, God Keeps

Lesson 29

The Arminian Objection

Can a Believer Lose Salvation? — The Debate Over the Security of the Believer

The Case for the Perseverance of the Saints — Answered and Defended

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out”

Key Texts: John 6:37–40; 10:27–30; Romans 8:28–39; Hebrews 6:4–9; 10:26–31; 1 John 2:19; Ephesians 4:30

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out... For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

John 6:37, 40, NASB 1995

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Introduction

Lessons 27 and 28 established the doctrine of the perseverance and preservation of the saints from the positive side: the Westminster Confession's formulation, the foundational texts (John 10:27–30; Romans 8:28–39; 1 Peter 1:3–5; Jude 24–25), the Trinitarian structure of the preservation, and the pastoral assurance the doctrine provides. Lesson 29 turns to the critical side: the Arminian objection, the theological tradition's most sustained and most exegetically-grounded challenge to the perseverance of the saints, and the Reformed response to it. This is not merely an exercise in academic polemics; it is one of the most practically significant theological debates in the whole of evangelical Christianity, because the question of whether a genuine believer can lose her salvation directly shapes the believer's understanding of the grounds of her assurance, the motivation of her obedience, and the pastoral word she gives and receives in the specific crises of the Christian life.

The Arminian position, named for the Dutch Reformed theologian Jacob Arminius (1560–1609) and developed by his followers at the Synod of Dort (1618–1619) in opposition to the Calvinist formulation of the five points, holds that it is possible for a genuinely regenerate person to fall away from grace and finally lose the salvation they have received, either through persistent, willful sin or through the deliberate abandonment of faith. The Arminian tradition does not teach that salvation is easily lost; it insists that genuine regeneration is a real transformation and that the loss of salvation requires a significant and sustained departure from grace. But it does maintain that the genuinely regenerate will is free to refuse the grace it has received and to depart finally from the saving relationship with God.

It is important to engage the Arminian position with the theological seriousness and the charitable precision it deserves. Many Arminians are genuine Christians who love the Lord, love the Scripture, and hold their position with careful exegetical reasoning rather than theological carelessness. The debate is a genuine debate between two traditions that both claim to be grounded in the biblical text and both understand themselves to be protecting important aspects of the gospel's truth. The Arminian concern is primarily the protection of genuine human freedom and genuine human responsibility in the relationship with God: the fear is that the Calvinist account of the perseverance produces either the presumption of those who claim the security without the necessary perseverance or the violation of the genuinely free character of the human response to grace. The Reformed response is that the genuine human responsibility can be fully preserved without making the ultimate ground of the security dependent on the quality of the human performance.

The lesson will proceed through seven major sections: the Arminian position stated precisely and charitably; the Arminian proof texts (Hebrews 6:4–6; 10:26–31; 2 Peter 2:20–22) and their exegetical claims; the Reformed response to the warning passages; the theological argument (from the monergistic character of regeneration); the Christological argument (from the completed atonement and the continuous intercession); the sealing argument (from the Spirit's sealing for the day of redemption); and the pastoral balance that closes Unit 9, the doctrine of perseverance as the ground of humble confidence, the fuel for faithful obedience, and the comfort of every soul that trembles at the question of final perseverance.

I. The Arminian Position

Stated Precisely and Charitably

A. *The Core Claim*

The Arminian doctrine of conditional security (also called the possibility of apostasy, or the loss of salvation) holds that the genuinely regenerate person retains the freedom to refuse or abandon the grace she has received, and that the final perseverance of the believer to the end is therefore conditional on her continued response of faith rather than guaranteed by the divine preserving purpose. The Arminian does not deny the reality of the new birth, the genuineness of the justification, or the presence of the Spirit's indwelling; she affirms all three but insists that the freedom that characterizes the human relationship to God is genuine at every stage of the relationship, including the post-regeneration stage. The freedom to receive grace is the same freedom that retains the ability to refuse it; and the same free will that said "yes" to the gospel's offer in the initial act of faith retains the freedom to say "no" in a subsequent act of deliberate apostasy.

The Arminian position must be distinguished from at least two related but distinct positions that are sometimes confused with it. First, it is distinct from the doctrine of backsliding: the Arminian tradition consistently maintains that genuine believers can experience extended seasons of serious moral failure, spiritual backsliding, and apparent departure from the practicing Christian life, while still retaining their salvation. The loss of salvation that the Arminian position describes is not the occasional failure of a genuine believer but the final, deliberate, complete repudiation of the faith through a sustained act of apostasy that the believer persists in without repentance. Second, it is distinct from the hyper-Arminian or popular "free grace" teaching that a Christian can lose their salvation through a single act of serious sin: most Arminian theologians require a sustained, willful, final repudiation of the faith rather than a single moral failure as the condition of salvation's loss.

The theological foundation of the Arminian position is the conception of divine grace as resistible at every stage of the saving relationship: just as prevenient grace can be resisted in the initial call (Arminianism rejects the Calvinist doctrine of irresistible grace), so the regenerating and sustaining grace can be resisted in the ongoing life of the believer. If grace is intrinsically non-coercive in the initial calling, the Arminian argues, consistency requires that it remain non-coercive throughout the believer's life, and a non-coercive grace is by definition a grace that the free will can resist, refuse, and ultimately abandon. The Reformed response is that the monergistic character of regeneration (the Spirit's sovereign impartation of new life to the spiritually dead sinner, who contributes nothing to the act of her own spiritual birth) establishes a qualitative difference between the pre-regeneration resistance to the gospel call and the post-regeneration relationship with God: the genuinely regenerate person has a new nature that is no longer in fundamental opposition to God, a new will that genuinely desires the things of God, and the Spirit's indwelling presence sustaining and renewing that desire continuously.

B. *A Note on Charitable Engagement*

The Reformed engagement with the Arminian position should be characterized by the specific theological charity that a genuine dispute between genuine Christians requires. The Arminian who holds the possibility of apostasy is not thereby denying the gospel or teaching a works-righteousness salvation; she is holding a position about the

relationship between divine grace and human freedom that has been held by significant numbers of genuine believers throughout the history of the church. The pastoral context for this engagement is the congregation of people who hold varying positions on the security of the believer, some of whom will have been raised in Arminian traditions and who bring to this discussion the specific anxieties and the specific pastoral experiences that the Arminian account of conditional security has produced in their spiritual lives. The goal of the lesson is not the triumphalist defeat of a theological opponent but the clearer understanding of the biblical testimony that produces the specific, well-grounded, pastoral assurance that the doctrine of perseverance is designed to provide.

II. The Arminian Proof Texts

The Exegetical Case for Conditional Security

A. *Hebrews 6:4–6*

The most significant Arminian proof text for the possibility of apostasy is Hebrews 6:4–6: “For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame” (NASB 1995). The Arminian reading of this passage presses specifically on the description of the persons warned: the five descriptors (enlightened; tasted the heavenly gift; partakers of the Holy Spirit; tasted the good word of God; tasted the powers of the age to come) are, on the Arminian reading, the specific markers of genuine regeneration. If these five descriptors describe the genuinely regenerate, then the passage is saying that genuinely regenerate persons can fall away, and the falling away is described as so severe and so complete that renewal to repentance is impossible.

The Arminian argument from Hebrews 6:4–6 is: (1) the five descriptors describe genuinely regenerate persons; (2) these genuinely regenerate persons can “fall away”; (3) therefore genuine regeneration can be followed by final apostasy. The exegetical weight of the Arminian case rests on the first premise: if the five descriptors do not require the conclusion that the persons described are genuinely regenerate, the entire argument fails. The Arminian insists that terms like “partakers of the Holy Spirit” (*metochous pneumatos hagiou*) must refer to genuine regeneration rather than to a non-regenerating experience of the Spirit’s influence, because “partakers” (*metochos*) implies genuine sharing rather than mere exposure. The Reformed response will address this exegetical claim directly in Section III.

B. *Hebrews 10:26–31*

Hebrews 10:26–29 provides the second major Arminian proof text: “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (NASB 1995). The Arminian reads the phrase “by which he was sanctified” (v. 29) as the decisive indicator that the person described was genuinely regenerate and sanctified

before falling away: the blood of the covenant “by which he was sanctified” must refer to a genuine sanctification, not merely an outward association with the covenant community.

The “no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (v. 26) is understood by the Arminian as the description of a person who has genuinely received the atonement’s benefits and has then so thoroughly rejected them that the atonement itself is no longer available as a covering for her willful, post-knowledge sins. The terrifying severity of the passage, “a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire”, is, on the Arminian reading, the specific description of the eternal fate awaiting those who were genuinely saved and have genuinely lost the salvation through the deliberate and final rejection of the Christ who sanctified them.

C. 2 Peter 2:20–22

Second Peter 2:20–22 provides the third significant Arminian proof text: “For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, ‘A dog returns to its own vomit,’ and, ‘A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire’” (NASB 1995). The Arminian reading: “escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” describes genuine regeneration and sanctification; the subsequent “again entangled” and “turned away from the holy commandment” describes a genuine apostasy from that genuine saving knowledge.

III. The Reformed Response to the Warning Passages

Two Tracks of Interpretation

A. Track One: The Description Does Not Require Genuine Regeneration

The Reformed response to the Arminian proof texts proceeds on two complementary tracks that are not alternatives but together constitute the comprehensive response to the exegetical challenge. The first track addresses the descriptions of those warned and argues that the descriptions, while impressive, do not necessarily describe the genuinely regenerate saints in the specific, Spirit-wrought, nature-transforming sense that produces the permanent perseverance of the saints.

For Hebrews 6:4–6, the Reformed argument focuses on the specific terms used and the distinction between genuine regeneration and non-regenerating experiences of the Spirit’s influence. “Enlightened” (phōtisthentes): the word is used in Hebrews 10:32 for the same community, where it seems to refer to the initial reception of the Christian teaching rather than necessarily to the regenerating illumination of the new birth. “Tasted of the heavenly gift” (geus. . . tēs doreās tēs epouraniou): the “tasting” metaphor does not necessarily imply full partaking or permanent possession, one can taste something and not be nourished by it; one can experience the proximity of the gift without receiving it as one’s permanent possession. “Partakers of the Holy Spirit” (metochous pneumatōs hagiou): the word metochos (partaker, sharer) is used in Hebrews 3:1 for those who “share in the heavenly calling,” and the question is whether “sharing in the Holy Spirit” necessarily describes the regenerating

indwelling of the Spirit or may describe the experience of the Spirit's work in and around the community without the permanent, nature-transforming, perseverance-producing regeneration.

The distinction that undergirds the Reformed interpretation is the distinction between the Spirit's influences on and around a person (which can be profound, apparently transformative, and yet not result in the permanent new birth) and the Spirit's regenerating work within a person (which is the sovereign impartation of the new nature that produces the permanent, persevering, nature-transformed faith). The New Testament's account of this distinction appears in several places: the parable of the soils (Matthew 13:18–23), where those who receive the word with joy and show apparent fruit before falling away are distinguished from those in whom the word takes root and bears lasting fruit; Matthew 7:21–23, where those who performed impressive miracles in Jesus' name are declared at the judgment to have been unknown by Him; and 1 John 2:19, which provides the theological principle that the genuine members of the community remain while those who were never genuinely regenerate depart.

For Hebrews 10:29's "by which he was sanctified," the Reformed interpretation offers two options: the "sanctified" may refer to the external, positional sanctification of covenant membership rather than the inward, regenerating sanctification of the new birth (the same way that Paul addresses the Corinthians as "sanctified in Christ Jesus" in 1 Corinthians 1:2 in reference to their definitive covenant standing rather than necessarily to each individual's genuine regeneration). Or, following the minority Reformed reading, the "he" of "by which he was sanctified" may refer to the apostate Israelite in the typological background of the passage rather than to the specific person being warned. For 2 Peter 2:20–22, the Reformed reads "escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord" as describing a real moral improvement and genuine exposure to the truth of the gospel without requiring the conclusion that the people described were genuinely regenerated, the dog and sow proverbs of verse 22 are the author's own interpretive key: the dog returns to its vomit and the sow to the mud because their fundamental nature has not changed; they were never genuinely new creatures.

B. Track Two: The Warnings as Instruments of Preservation

The second track of the Reformed response does not require the conclusion that those warned were not genuinely regenerate; it argues that even if the warning passages are addressed to the genuinely regenerate, they function as the Spirit-applied instruments through which God preserves His genuine people in faithfulness rather than as descriptions of what will happen to genuine believers who fall away. This interpretation was established in Lesson 27's treatment of the warning passages and is worth reiterating here as the second pillar of the Reformed response.

The functional argument is this: the warning passages produce in genuine believers the specific, watchful, Spirit-responsive, self-examining diligence that makes the apostasy increasingly impossible in those who receive the warning with genuine faith. The genuine believer who reads Hebrews 6:4–6 and responds with the specific, Spirit-produced, "I must not fall away; I must press on in faithfulness" is the genuine believer whose Spirit-produced response to the warning is the specific engagement with the means of grace and the specific perseverance in holiness that ensures the warned-against outcome does not occur. The warning functions as a means of preservation: God uses it to produce in genuine believers the diligence and the watchfulness that prevent the falling away from happening.

The two tracks together constitute the comprehensive Reformed response: the descriptions of those warned do not require the conclusion that they were genuinely regenerate (Track One), and even if they were, the warnings function as instruments of the preservation of genuine believers rather than as descriptions of what genuine believers can experience (Track Two). Either track is sufficient for the Reformed response; together they are mutually reinforcing and provide a complete account of the warning passages' relationship to the doctrine of perseverance.

IV. The Theological Argument

The Monergism of Regeneration and the Immutability of God

A. If Regeneration Is Monergistic, Its Reversal Would Require God to Undo His Own Work

The most fundamental theological argument against the Arminian possibility of apostasy is grounded in the monergistic character of regeneration. Lessons 11 and 12 established that regeneration is the sovereign, unilateral, Spirit-accomplished impartation of new life to the spiritually dead sinner, an act in which the sinner contributes nothing and the Spirit alone is the effective agent. The sinner does not regenerate herself, does not cooperate in her own spiritual birth, and does not provide any condition that the Spirit must fulfill before He imparts the new life. The regeneration is entirely the Spirit's sovereign work, accomplished according to the Father's electing purpose and the Son's accomplished redemption.

If regeneration is genuinely monergistic, if the Spirit alone gave the new life, without any contribution from the sinner's free will, then the reversal of regeneration would require the Spirit alone to take back the new life, without any contribution from the sinner's free will. But the Arminian account of the loss of salvation attributes the loss to the sinner's free decision to abandon faith, which is to say, the sinner's free will contributes to the loss of the salvation even though the sinner's free will did not contribute to its reception. This asymmetry is theologically incoherent: if the human will was genuinely passive in the reception of the new birth (which the monergistic account of regeneration affirms), how can the human will be genuinely active in the loss of the new birth? The monergistic regeneration implies the sovereign preservation: the Spirit who sovereignly gave the new life is the Spirit who sovereignly maintains it, and the free will that was not a causal factor in the new life's reception cannot be a causal factor in its loss.

The divine immutability reinforces the theological argument: if God's character does not change, His purposes do not change, and His covenant commitments do not change, then the divine decision to regenerate a specific person is not a decision that God subsequently reverses. Romans 11:29 establishes the principle: "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (NASB 1995). The gift of the new birth is the gift of God; the calling to salvation is the calling of God; and the irrevocability of the divine gifts and callings means that the regeneration, once accomplished by the sovereign Spirit, is not reversed by the subsequent failure of the regenerated person's free will. The God who does not change His mind about His purposes (Numbers 23:19) does not un-regenerate those He has regenerated; the Spirit who sealed the believer "for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30) does not revoke the seal before the day for which it was issued.

B. The New Nature and Its Permanent Character

The Second Corinthians 5:17 declaration, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (NASB 1995), establishes the ontological permanence of the transformation that the regeneration accomplishes. The new creature is genuinely new: not the old nature with improved performance, not the old nature with new dispositions added as an overlay, but a fundamentally, ontologically new creation in which “old things passed away” and “new things have come.” If the loss of salvation required the reversal of this transformation, the new creature reverting to the old creature, the new things passing away and the old things returning, it would require not merely the reversal of the human faith-decision but the reversal of the divine creative act that the new birth accomplished. The Arminian account of salvation loss must, to be theologically consistent, explain how the new creature of 2 Corinthians 5:17 can become the old creature again, how the “old things passed away” can un-pass away and the “new things have come” can un-come. The theological incoherence of this explanation is the strongest internal argument against the Arminian position.

V. The Christological Argument

The Loss of a Soul Would Be a Failure of the Atonement and the Intercession

A. John 6:37–40 and the Christological Guarantee

John 6:37–40 provides one of the strongest Christological grounds for the perseverance of the saints, grounding the security of the believer in the specific, promise-backed, resurrection-guaranteed commitment of the incarnate Son: “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day” (NASB 1995). The passage establishes the Christological guarantee of perseverance on three specific grounds.

First, the “one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (v. 37b): the absolute negative, “certainly not” (οὐ μὲν, the strongest possible negation in Greek), establishes that the one who genuinely comes to Christ is not cast out under any conditions. The casting-out is the loss of salvation from the divine side: the Christ to whom the sinner has genuinely come will not expel, reject, or abandon her. Second, the “that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day” (v. 39): the Son’s specific commitment to the preservation of every one whom the Father has given Him, expressed as the divine mission whose success is guaranteed by the Father’s will. The loss of any single given soul would be a failure of the Son’s mission, a failure to accomplish the specific will of the Father who sent Him to save all that the Father gives, not merely some or most. Third, the “I Myself will raise him up on the last day” (v. 40): the eschatological resurrection is the personal commitment of the Son to each believing person, grounding the final salvation in the Son’s own power and purpose rather than in the sustained quality of the believer’s own faith.

B. The Completed Atonement and the Loss of a Redeemed Soul

The theological implication of the completed atonement for the possibility of apostasy is the most decisive Christological argument against the Arminian position. Romans 8:34’s rhetorical challenge, “Who is the one who

condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us”, establishes that the condemnation of the redeemed is impossible on Christological grounds: the same Christ who died for the specific persons is the Christ who was raised and who intercedes for those specific persons at the Father’s right hand. If the loss of salvation were possible for a genuinely redeemed person, it would mean one of two things: either the atonement’s purchase was insufficient to secure the final salvation (which compromises the sufficiency and the efficacy of the atoning work) or the Son’s continuous intercession is insufficient to maintain the connection between the redeemed and the redemption they have received (which compromises the effectiveness of the ongoing mediatorial ministry).

The Arminian response to this argument is to distinguish between the objective sufficiency of the atonement (Christ’s death is sufficient to save all, and is sufficient for the complete final salvation of every person it is applied to) and the subjective appropriation of the atonement (the individual believer’s ongoing faith is the instrument through which the atonement’s benefits remain applied). On this account, the loss of salvation does not represent a failure of the atonement itself but the withdrawal of the faith through which the atonement’s benefits are appropriated. The Reformed response: the Hebrews 7:25 account of the Son as the One who “always lives to make intercession” specifically addresses the ongoing application of the atonement, and the Son whose living intercession is continuous and effective is precisely the One who maintains the application of the completed work to those for whom He both died and intercedes. The intercession does not merely continue as long as the faith continues; it continues to maintain and sustain the faith that is the instrument of the application.

The specific force of John 6:39, “that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day”, is the clearest possible statement that the loss of a genuinely given soul would constitute a failure of the Son’s mission. The “I lose nothing” is not a description of what will happen if the believer maintains the faith; it is the description of what the Son commits to as the specific will of the Father who sent Him. The Father willed the preservation of every given soul; the Son commits to accomplishing that specific will; and the resurrection on the last day is the specific, eschatological expression of the Son’s completed accomplishment of the Father’s will for every genuinely given person. The possibility of losing a given soul is the possibility of the Son failing to accomplish the Father’s will, a possibility that the Christological account of John 6:37–40 rules out in the most absolute terms available.

VI. The Sealing Argument

The Spirit’s Seal Holds Until the Day of Redemption

A. Ephesians 4:30 and the Temporal Scope of the Seal

The sealing argument for the perseverance of the saints draws directly on the Spirit’s specific, temporally-defined sealing ministry established in Lesson 28: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30, NASB 1995). The critical phrase is “for the day of redemption” (eis hēmeran apolytroāseōs): the sealing is specifically aimed at and valid through the final day of redemption, not merely until the believer’s next significant failure, not merely until the faith wavers, not merely until the quality of the believer’s spiritual performance drops below some threshold, but for the day of redemption itself.

The Arminian must, to be consistent with the possibility of apostasy, argue that the Spirit's sealing can be revoked before the day of redemption for which it was issued. But the sealing language of the ancient world (the owner's seal marking the possession as belonging to and protected by the seal's owner) implies the permanence of the ownership and the protection until the seal's specific purpose has been accomplished. The seal issued "for the day of redemption" is the seal that the Day of Redemption will fulfill, not a seal that the believer's subsequent failure can revoke. The Spirit who issued the seal is the Spirit of the God whose purposes do not fail and whose gifts and callings are irrevocable (Romans 11:29); the seal He issues is as permanent as His own faithfulness.

Ephesians 1:13–14's account of the Spirit as the *arrabōn*, the binding pledge of the inheritance, reinforces the sealing argument with the commercial-pledge metaphor: the *arrabōn* binds the contract and guarantees the completion of the full transaction. If the loss of salvation were possible, the Spirit given as the *arrabōn* would be the down payment whose receipt did not guarantee the delivery of the remainder, which is the precise opposite of what an *arrabōn* is designed to do. An *arrabōn* that does not guarantee the completion of the transaction is not an *arrabōn* at all; it is a payment that may or may not be followed by the full delivery, depending on conditions not established in the original contract. The specific force of the *arrabōn* metaphor is destroyed by the possibility of apostasy: if the Spirit given as the pledge of the inheritance does not guarantee the receipt of the inheritance, then the pledge has failed of its specific purpose.

B. John 14:16–17 and the Permanence of the Spirit's Indwelling

John 14:16–17 provides the most direct statement of the permanence of the Spirit's indwelling: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you" (NASB 1995). The "forever" (*eis ton aiōna*, into the age, permanently) is the specific declaration of the permanent, never-terminated character of the Spirit's indwelling presence with and in the genuine believer. The Spirit is given to be with the believer forever, not conditionally, not for a season, not subject to revocation by the believer's failure, but permanently and permanently in a word that admits no qualification.

The Arminian account of the loss of salvation must, on the basis of John 14:16–17, explain how the Spirit who was given to be "with them forever" can cease to be with a genuinely regenerate person who apostatizes. If the Spirit's permanent presence is one of the specific gifts of the genuine regeneration, then the loss of salvation would require the permanent Spirit to depart, which is the contradiction of His own self-described permanent status. The Arminian response is typically that "forever" refers to the Spirit's permanent availability and willingness to indwell rather than the permanent actuality of His indwelling, that the Spirit's permanence is the permanence of the offer, not the permanence of the received gift. The Reformed response: the text says "He... will be in you" (en hymn estai), the future indicative of actual indwelling rather than the future indicative of available presence; and the "forever" qualifies the actual indwelling that the context describes, not a merely theoretical availability.

VII. The Pastoral Balance

Humble Confidence, Faithful Obedience, Comforting Assurance

A. Not a License for Complacency

The pastoral balance with which Unit 9 closes is the same balance that Lesson 27 established in its treatment of the perseverance-and-presumption distinction: the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is not a license for complacency, not a theological permission slip for the moral indolence of those who claim the security without the perseverance, not the comfortable announcement that nothing the believer does or fails to do has any bearing on the ultimate outcome of the salvation. The doctrine establishes the ultimate ground of the security in the divine faithfulness rather than in the quality of the believer's performance, but the divine faithfulness that secures the final outcome does so precisely by producing and maintaining the genuine faith and the genuine holiness that characterize the persevering saint.

The Westminster Confession's characterization of the certainty of perseverance as "a foundation of humility and holy fear, not of carelessness or of licentiousness" (WCF XVII.3) is the specific pastoral guidance for the application of the doctrine in the congregation. The believer who has genuinely understood the doctrine is not the one who says "I cannot lose my salvation, so it does not matter what I do", she is the one who says "I cannot lose my salvation because the God who began a good work in me will bring it to completion; therefore I am free to pursue holiness without the anxiety of the one whose salvation depends on the quality of the pursuing." The security liberates from the moralistic treadmill; it does not exempt from the holiness-pursuit. The freedom from performance anxiety is the freedom to pursue genuine holiness, motivated by gratitude rather than by the fear of losing what only the divine faithfulness can maintain.

B. The Three Pastoral Uses of the Doctrine

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints has three specific pastoral uses, each addressing a different dimension of the pastoral situation in the congregation. First, it is the ground of humble confidence for the genuinely regenerate believer who is troubled by the quality of her own perseverance. The confidence is not in the perseverance itself but in the divine preservation that produces and sustains it; the humility is the honest recognition that the perseverance, however genuine, is not the believer's own achievement but the Spirit's fruit. The humble confidence says: "I am not confident in the strength of my faith; I am confident in the faithfulness of the God who keeps it."

Second, the doctrine is the fuel for faithful obedience in the life of the genuinely persevering believer. The objection that the doctrine of security produces moral indolence ("why pursue holiness if salvation is guaranteed?") is answered by the specific character of the regenerate nature's motivation: the genuinely regenerate believer pursues holiness not to maintain the salvation but because the regenerate nature's deepest desire is the Christlikeness toward which the Spirit is progressively conforming it. The security of the salvation frees the pursuit of holiness from the moralistic anxiety that corrupts its character, it does not eliminate the pursuit. Romans 6:1–2's answer to the antinomian objection ("Shall we continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be!") is the answer to the complacency objection as well: the grace that produces the security also produces the new nature that is genuinely opposed to the sin that the complacent would excuse.

Third, the doctrine is the comfort of every soul that trembles over the question "Will I make it to the end?" For the believer in the midst of the most severe spiritual testing, the most prolonged season of apparent failure, the most discouraging experience of the persistent strength of the remaining sin and the apparent weakness of the resisting faith, the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints provides the specific, pastorally indispensable word that no other doctrine can provide in the same form: you will make it to the end, not because of the strength of your grip but because of the faithfulness of the God whose grip is greater than all. The trembling believer is not

the one who has failed to understand the doctrine; she is the one who has understood it most clearly, who knows the weakness of her own hold and is trusting precisely in the strength of the Father's hand rather than in the quality of her own spiritual performance.

John 6:37's promise, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out", is the specific, Christological, personally-addressed comfort for the trembling believer: if you have come to Christ, you will not be cast out. The coming is the evidence of the Father's giving; the giving is the ground of the coming; and the "certainly not cast out" is the absolute, ou-mē-negative, Son-of-God-backed promise that the one who has come will remain, not because the coming was strong enough to sustain the remaining, but because the One to whom she came has committed in the most absolute terms available that He will not expel, reject, or abandon the one who has come to Him. You have come. He will not cast you out. This is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints in its most pastorally direct and most personally comforting form.

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:38–39, NASB 1995

Theological Terms and Definitions

Arminianism	The theological tradition that developed from the thought of Jacob Arminius (1560–1609) and was formalized in the Remonstrance of 1610, subsequently condemned at the Synod of Dort (1618–1619). The five points of Arminianism oppose the five points of Calvinism on the issues of total depravity (Arminianism affirms prevenient grace that restores ability to respond), unconditional election (Arminianism holds conditional election based on foreknown faith), limited atonement (Arminianism affirms universal atonement), irresistible grace (Arminianism affirms resistible grace), and perseverance (Arminianism holds conditional security or the possibility of apostasy). In contemporary evangelical Christianity, Arminianism is the most widely held theological position, represented in the Methodist, Wesleyan, Holiness, Pentecostal, and many Baptist traditions.
Conditional Security	The Arminian doctrine that the genuinely regenerate believer's salvation is conditioned on the continued exercise of faith and that it is possible for a genuinely regenerate person to fall away from grace and lose the salvation they have received through persistent, willful apostasy. Distinguished from: (1) the doctrine that salvation is easily lost through ordinary sin (most Arminian theologians require a sustained, willful, final repudiation of faith, not a single failure); (2) the doctrine that backsliding leads to loss of salvation (Arminianism allows for serious backsliding without loss of salvation). The conditional security doctrine stands in direct opposition to the Reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and is grounded primarily in the Arminian conception of the genuinely free human will as retaining at every stage of the relationship with God the freedom to resist and refuse the grace received.
Synod of Dort	The international Reformed ecclesiastical council convened in Dordrecht (Dort), Netherlands, 1618–1619, in response to the Arminian Remonstrance. Representatives from the Reformed churches of the Netherlands, England, Scotland, Germany, Switzerland, and France attended. The Synod condemned the five articles of the Arminian Remonstrance and articulated the five points of Calvinism (TULIP) in the Canons of Dort: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, and Perseverance of the saints. The Canons of Dort remain one of the three standards of the confessional Reformed and Dutch Reformed traditions alongside the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession.
Ou Me	Greek: the strongest possible negative in the language, formed by combining the two negative particles ou (not) and mē (not), used in John 6:37 (“the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out”, ou mē ekbalō). The ou mē construction is used for the most emphatic, absolute, unconditional denials in the New Testament, “this will certainly never happen.” Its use in John 6:37 establishes the most absolute possible guarantee that the one who genuinely comes to Christ will not be expelled: not under any condition, not for any reason, not in any circumstance. The Arminian account of the loss of salvation requires the ou mē to be conditional (“certainly not cast out unless she subsequently abandons faith”), which contradicts the specific force of the double negative.
Metochos	Greek: “partaker,” “sharer,” “one who has a share in”, the word used in Hebrews 6:4 for those who “have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit” (metochous pneumatōs hagiou). The Arminian interpretation: metochos implies genuine sharing and therefore genuine Spirit-indwelling regeneration. The Reformed interpretation: metochos in Hebrews is used for those who “share in the heavenly calling” (3:1) in a context that does not necessarily imply individual regeneration, and the “partaking of the Holy Spirit” may describe the experience of the Spirit’s influence in and around the covenant community without the regenerating, nature-transforming, permanently-indwelling work that produces the persevering faith. The distinction between the Spirit’s influence on and around a person and the Spirit’s regenerating work within a person is the exegetical key to the Reformed interpretation.

Resistible Grace	The Arminian doctrine that divine grace, at every stage of the saving process, the prevenient restoration of ability to respond, the effective calling to faith, and the sustaining of the regenerate life, is genuinely resistible by the free human will. Contrasted with the Reformed doctrine of irresistible grace (also called efficacious grace): the regenerating work of the Spirit is sovereign and effective, producing the new birth in those whom God has elected without being contingent on the cooperation of the human will. The Arminian view grounds the conditional security of the believer in the consistency of the resistible-grace principle throughout the saving relationship: the grace that can be resisted in the initial call can also be resisted in the ongoing relationship, and the same freedom that received the grace retains the freedom to refuse it.
Prevenient Grace	The Arminian doctrine that God extends a universal, enabling, pre-regenerating grace to all human beings that restores to the fallen will the ability to respond to the gospel. Prevenient grace (from the Latin <i>praevenire</i> , to come before) is the grace that “comes before” the human response of faith, enabling the response without determining it, restoring the ability without guaranteeing the exercise of it. For Arminianism, prevenient grace is the theological mechanism that reconciles universal human sinfulness (total depravity) with the genuine human freedom to accept or reject the gospel. The Reformed critique: the New Testament’s account of the new birth (John 3:3–8) and the regenerating Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26–27) describes a sovereign, transforming, nature-changing work rather than a merely enabling preparation for the human exercise of free choice.
Final Apostasy	The sustained, willful, complete repudiation of the saving faith that, on the Arminian account, constitutes the specific condition under which salvation can be lost. Distinguished from: ordinary failure (which does not threaten the salvation), backsliding (which may be extended without constituting final apostasy), and doubt (which is not the repudiation of faith but its troubled maintenance). The Arminian account of what constitutes final apostasy varies in its specificity among different Arminian theologians, but the general consensus is that final apostasy requires a sustained, deliberate, conscious refusal of the faith rather than a momentary act of sin or doubt. The Reformed response: the 1 John 2:19 principle applies, those who finally and totally apostatize demonstrate by their departure that they were never genuinely of the regenerate community, regardless of how genuine their prior participation appeared.
Remonstrance of 1610	The formal document presented to the States of Holland by the followers of Arminius (the Remonstrants) shortly after Arminius’s death, articulating five articles in opposition to the Calvinist formulation of predestination and grace: (1) election based on foreknown faith; (2) Christ’s universal atoning work; (3) the corrupted but not totally depraved nature that requires prevenient grace; (4) the resistibility of the divine grace; and (5) the conditionality of the perseverance (the Remonstrants were uncertain about the fifth point at the time of the Remonstrance, framing it as a question rather than a definitive position). The Synod of Dort convened specifically to evaluate and respond to the Remonstrance, producing the Canons of Dort as the Reformed confessional response.

Practical Application

A. For the Mind: What Must We Believe?

We must believe the Reformed position on the security of the believer with both theological precision and pastoral charity: theological precision, because the specific exegetical and theological arguments for the perseverance of the saints (the monergism of regeneration, the Christological guarantee, the sealing argument, the Reformed interpretation of the warning passages) are well-grounded in the biblical testimony and deserve the confident, reasoned adherence of those who have examined them carefully; and pastoral charity, because many genuine Christians hold the Arminian position with genuine faith and genuine exegetical reasoning, and the engagement with their position should reflect the seriousness with which they hold it.

We must believe that the three arguments against the possibility of apostasy are cumulative and mutually reinforcing. The theological argument (from the monergism of regeneration and the divine immutability) establishes that the loss of salvation would require God to undo His own sovereign, immutable, covenant-backed work. The Christological argument (from the completed atonement and the continuous intercession) establishes that the loss of a genuinely redeemed soul would constitute a failure of the Son's specific, Father-commissioned mission ("that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing", John 6:39). The sealing argument (from the Spirit's sealing for the day of redemption) establishes that the loss of salvation before the day of redemption would represent the Spirit's revocation of the seal He specifically issued for the purpose of keeping it valid through that day. Together, the three arguments establish the perseverance of the saints on the most comprehensive possible Trinitarian ground: the Father's immutable purpose, the Son's completed redemption and continuous intercession, and the Spirit's permanent sealing.

We must believe that the pastoral balance, the doctrine of perseverance as the ground of humble confidence rather than complacent presumption, is the specific, Spirit-produced, character-expressing response of the genuinely regenerate soul to the security it has received. The doctrine does not produce complacency in those who have genuinely received it; it produces the specific, gratitude-motivated, grace-grounded, performance-anxiety-free pursuit of holiness that the genuinely regenerate nature desires. The believer who uses the doctrine of security to excuse the absence of the holiness-pursuit has not genuinely received the doctrine; the believer who uses the doctrine of security to pursue holiness freely, without the moralistic anxiety that makes the pursuit self-defeating, has received it exactly as it was intended.

B. For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?

Desire the specific, humble, Christological confidence that John 6:37's promise provides: "The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." Not the arrogant confidence of the one who presumes upon the security without the perseverance, but the humble confidence of the one who knows that the security rests on the Son's promise rather than on her own sustained spiritual performance. The "certainly not cast out" is addressed to the one who has come, and the evidence of having come is the specific, Spirit-produced, genuinely regenerate faith that is itself the fruit of the Father's giving and the Spirit's regenerating work. If you have come, you will not be cast out. Rest in the promise, not in the quality of the coming.

Desire the theological wisdom to engage the Arminian position with the specific combination of conviction and charity that genuine theological engagement requires. Not the dismissive certainty of the one who has no interest

in the exegetical case the Arminian is making, not the capitulation of the one who finds the warning passages so formidable that the Reformed interpretation seems impossible, but the honest, exegetically-engaged, charitably-expressed conviction of the one who has examined both the Arminian case and the Reformed response carefully and finds the Reformed response exegetically adequate and theologically superior. The theological engagement with the Arminian position is itself a form of pastoral care for those in your congregation who hold Arminian positions and whose pastoral lives are shaped by the specific anxieties that the conditional security doctrine produces.

Desire for those in your pastoral care who are living under the anxiety of conditional security, whose assurance fluctuates with the quality of their spiritual performance, and whose specific failures produce the specific fear that the salvation has been jeopardized, the specific pastoral liberation that the three arguments of this lesson provide. Not the dismissal of their concern (“Your failures don’t matter”) and not the reinforcement of their performance-anxiety (“You need to be more consistent in your holiness”), but the specific, gracious, Christological word: “You have come to Christ. He will certainly not cast you out. The one who gave you is the Father; the one who intercedes for you is the Son; the one who sealed you is the Spirit. And none of them will fail you.”

C. For the Hands: What Must We Do?

- Read Hebrews 6:1–12 and 10:19–31 as complete passages rather than isolated proof texts, reading each warning in its full literary context rather than extracting the warning verses from the surrounding argument. For Hebrews 6:1–12: what is the author’s purpose in these verses (v. 1: “therefore let us press on to maturity”), and how does the warning of verses 4–6 serve that purpose? Note verse 9’s specific address (“But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way”), how does this verse indicate that the author does not believe the warning of verses 4–6 applies to the genuine believers he is addressing? For Hebrews 10:19–31: what is the specific sin described in verse 26 (“sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth”), and who are the most likely recipients of this warning in the historical context (Jewish believers considering return to Judaism)?
- Study the key Arminian proof texts (Hebrews 6:4–6; 10:26–31; 2 Peter 2:20–22) with the specific question: do the descriptions in each passage necessarily describe the genuinely regenerate? For Hebrews 6: apply the Reformed interpretation to each of the five descriptors (enlightened, tasted, partakers, tasted the good word, tasted the powers of the age to come) and evaluate whether each necessarily implies genuine regeneration. For 2 Peter 2:20–22: apply the Reformed interpretation to the dog-and-sow proverbs of verse 22 as the author’s own interpretive key, does the proverb suggest that the animals changed their fundamental nature and reverted, or that their fundamental nature was unchanged and therefore the surface-level cleaning did not produce a permanent transformation? Ask: how does the proverb, as the author’s own hermeneutical key, support the Reformed reading that the people described were never genuinely regenerate?
- Examine the Christological argument from John 6:37–40 with specific attention to the *ou mē* of verse 37b (“I will certainly not cast out”). Ask: what does the strongest possible Greek negative construction establish about the absoluteness of the promise? Is it possible to read the *ou mē* as conditional (“certainly not cast out unless”...) without violating the specific force of the construction? Then examine verse 39 (“that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing”) and ask: if the loss of a single genuinely given soul were possible, would that constitute a failure of the Son’s mission as the Father’s will has defined it in verse 39? And how does the specific, eschatological, personal commitment of verse 40 (“I Myself will raise him up on the last

day”) ground the final salvation in the Son’s own power and purpose rather than in the sustained quality of the believer’s faith?

- Read Romans 6:1–14 as the New Testament’s direct answer to the antinomian objection (which is structurally the same as the Arminian’s complacency objection). Note that Paul answers the “Shall we continue in sin that grace may increase?” (v. 1) not by qualifying the security (“Yes, unless you continue in sin”) but by appealing to the new nature (“May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”, v. 2). Ask: what does Paul’s response to the antinomian objection establish about the relationship between the security of the salvation and the motivation for holiness? Does the security produce the antinomian license (as both the Arminian and the antinomian assume), or does the new nature that the security is grounded in make the license theologically impossible for the genuinely regenerate? And how does this establish that the Arminian’s concern about complacency is addressed by the new nature rather than by the conditionality of the security?
- Prepare a brief pastoral summary (one page, or a five-minute verbal presentation to your study group) of the Reformed answer to the question “Can a genuine believer lose salvation?” that is: (1) exegetically grounded (engaging the Arminian proof texts honestly, not avoiding them); (2) theologically precise (deploying the three arguments, theological, Christological, sealing); (3) pastorally warm (providing the specific, personally-addressed comfort of John 6:37 and the specific, liberation-providing pastoral balance of Section VII); and (4) charitably worded (acknowledging the genuine faith of many Arminians and the genuine exegetical reasoning behind the Arminian position without conceding the exegetical or theological case). This summary is your pastoral distillation of Unit 9’s full doctrinal content, prepared for the specific person in your congregation who is asking the question with the greatest urgency.

Key Texts: *John 6:37–40; 10:27–30; 14:16–17; Romans 8:34–39; 11:29; Hebrews 6:4–9; 7:25; 10:26–31; 1 John 2:19; Ephesians 4:30; 1:13–14; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 2 Peter 2:20–22*

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- Before studying this lesson's arguments, which of the three Arminian proof texts, Hebrews 6:4–6, Hebrews 10:26–31, or 2 Peter 2:20–22, do you find most challenging to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, and why? What specific element of the passage makes the Reformed interpretation most difficult for you to accept? And what is the pastoral cost, in your own experience or in the experience of those you have pastored, of holding the conditional security position, what specific anxieties or spiritual consequences have you observed in people who believe that a genuine believer can lose salvation?

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

- Read John 6:35–40. In verse 37, what is the Christological guarantee given to those who “come to Me,” and what is the grammatical construction of the negative (“will certainly not cast out”, the *ou mē* construction)? In verse 38, what grounds the Son’s commitment to keeping those who come (His relationship to the Father’s will)? In verse 39, what is the specific content of the Father’s will (“that of all that He has given Me I...”), and what is the eschatological expression of the completion (“but raise it up on...”) In verse 40, how does the Father’s will in verse 39 relate to the individual believer’s experience (“everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him...”) And how do the two eschatological resurrection references (vv. 39 and 40) establish the final salvation as the Son’s personal, committed act rather than as the outcome of the believer’s sustained faithfulness?
- Read Hebrews 6:1–12. In verses 4–6, list the five descriptors of the people warned. For each, ask: does the term necessarily imply genuine regeneration, or could it describe a non-regenerating spiritual experience? In verse 6, what is the specific action described (“fallen away”, Greek: *parapesontas*, aorist participle, what does the aorist tense suggest about the character of the falling?), and what is the specific consequence described (“it is impossible to renew them again to repentance”)? In verse 9, what is the author’s specific address to his readers, and how does it distinguish the readers from those described in verses 4–6? In verses 11–12, what does the author call the readers to be “diligent” about, and how does this call relate to the warning of verses 4–6?
- Read Hebrews 10:19–31. In verses 19–23, what three grounds for drawing near are given (v. 19: confidence by...; v. 21: a great priest...; v. 22: hearts sprinkled...), and what three exhortations follow (v. 22: draw near...; v. 23: hold fast...; v. 24: consider how...)? In verse 26, what is the specific sin that makes the subsequent judgment unavoidable (“sinning willfully after receiving...”), and what is the historical background of the “no longer remains a sacrifice” language (the deliberate rejection of the final sacrifice by returning to the Mosaic system that has been superseded)? In verse 29, what are the three descriptions of the apostate’s action toward the Trinity? And how does the “by which he was sanctified” of verse 29 function in the Arminian reading versus the Reformed reading?
- Read 2 Corinthians 5:14–17 and 2 Peter 2:18–22. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, what is the scope of the transformation described by “new creature,” and what does “old things passed away” imply about the fundamental character of the regenerating work? How would the loss of salvation require this declaration to be reversed? In 2 Peter 2:20–22, what is the description of the people whose last state is worse than the first (“after they have escaped... through the knowledge of...”) In verse 22, what are the two proverbs, and what is the specific insight each provides about the nature of the return (“a dog returns to...”; “a sow...

returns to...")? How do the proverbs function as the author's interpretive key to the passage: do they suggest fundamental nature-change followed by reversion, or fundamental nature-consistency that the surface-level cleaning did not alter?

- Read Romans 8:33–39 and Romans 11:28–29. In Romans 8:33–34, what are the two rhetorical challenges and their specific answers? In 8:35, what catalogue of potential separating forces does Paul list, and are these forces abstract theoretical possibilities or the actual concrete challenges of the Roman believers' lives (see v. 36's Psalm 44:22 citation)? In 8:37, what is the specific mode of the believers' relationship to these forces ("in all these things we overwhelmingly...")? In 8:38–39, how does the comprehensive catalogue (death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, any other created thing) establish the exhaustiveness of the inseparability? And in Romans 11:29, what does the irrevocability of the divine gifts and calling establish about the permanence of the regenerating and justifying work?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

- The lesson presents the theological argument from the monergism of regeneration: if the Spirit alone gave the new life, then the reversal of regeneration would require the Spirit alone to take it back, and the Arminian account of the loss of salvation through the human free will's abandonment of faith involves a logical asymmetry. Evaluate the force of this argument. Does the Arminian account of prevenient grace, which restores the human will's ability to respond to grace, adequately address the monergism-based argument by establishing a consistent role for human freedom at every stage of the saving relationship? Or does the specific, sovereign, nature-transforming character of the regeneration (as distinct from the merely enabling character of prevenient grace) still create the asymmetry the theological argument identifies?
- The Christological argument claims that the loss of a single genuinely redeemed soul would represent a failure of the Son's specific, Father-commissioned mission in John 6:39 ("that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing"). Evaluate the adequacy of the Arminian response to this argument: the Arminian distinguishes between the objective sufficiency of the atonement (adequate to secure the final salvation) and the subjective appropriation of the atonement (conditioned on the believer's ongoing faith). Does this distinction adequately address the specific claim of John 6:39, or does the Father's will ("that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing") specifically establish the preservation of each individually given person rather than merely the objective adequacy of the atonement for all given persons?
- The lesson presents two tracks of the Reformed response to the warning passages: the description does not necessarily describe the genuinely regenerate (Track One), and the warnings function as instruments of preservation even if addressed to genuine believers (Track Two). Evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of each track. Which is more exegetically defensible? Which is more pastorally useful? And is there a sense in which the two tracks are in tension with each other, does the use of Track Two (the warnings can function instrumentally even if addressed to genuine believers) inadvertently concede the Arminian's first premise (that the passages describe genuine believers) in a way that weakens Track One?
- The lesson argues that the sealing argument (Ephesians 4:30's "sealed for the day of redemption") establishes the permanent validity of the Spirit's seal through the day of redemption. Evaluate the Arminian response: the seal is permanent as long as the believer maintains the faith through which the sealing was applied, but the deliberate and sustained abandonment of faith constitutes a breach of the covenant relationship that the seal was designed to certify. Is this Arminian reading of the sealing language theologically coherent? Does the ancient sealing metaphor (the owner's seal marking ownership and protection) allow for the interpretation that the seal is revocable by the sealed party's behavior? And does

John 14:16–17’s “forever” qualification of the Spirit’s presence provide additional support for the permanence of the sealing against this Arminian qualification?

- The lesson’s pastoral balance claims that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints produces humble confidence, faithful obedience, and comforting assurance, and that the Arminian concern about complacency is addressed by the new nature rather than by the conditionality of the security. Evaluate the adequacy of this claim for the pastoral situation of genuine believers who are experiencing extended periods of serious moral failure without apparent repentance. Does the doctrine of perseverance provide the right pastoral word for the believer who is in deliberate, sustained, apparently willful sin without repentance? Or does the Arminian account of conditional security provide a more urgent and more practically effective pastoral challenge to that specific person? And how does the distinction between genuine perseverance (the faith and holiness that characterizes the genuinely regenerate) and the presumption that misuses the doctrine (the claim of security without the perseverance) address this specific pastoral situation?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

- The lesson calls for theological precision and pastoral charity in the engagement with the Arminian position. Evaluate your own current approach to the Arminian tradition: is it more characterized by precision (careful engagement with the exegetical and theological arguments) or charity (genuine appreciation of the Arminian’s concern for genuine human freedom and genuine human responsibility)? What specific aspect of the Arminian concern do you find most theologically legitimate, the protection of genuine human freedom, the pastoral urgency of the warning passages, the apparent testimony of those who appeared to genuinely believe and have now apparently departed? And what specific aspect of the Reformed response most adequately addresses that legitimate concern?
- The lesson names three specific pastoral uses of the doctrine of perseverance: the ground of humble confidence, the fuel for faithful obedience, and the comfort of the trembling believer. For each use, identify the specific person in your pastoral care who most urgently needs that specific use of the doctrine. For humble confidence: the person whose assurance fluctuates most severely with the quality of spiritual performance. For faithful obedience: the person who is most prone to the complacency that misuses the doctrine as an excuse for the absence of the holiness-pursuit. For the comfort of the trembling believer: the person who is most genuinely troubled by the question of whether she will make it to the end. What specific text, what specific argument, and what specific pastoral approach would most effectively deliver the specific use to the specific person?
- The lesson closes with John 6:37’s “the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” as the specific, personally-addressed, Christological comfort for the trembling believer. Practice using this promise as a pastoral tool: in conversation with a person who is troubled about her security, how would you use John 6:37 to address the specific form of her anxiety? What is the question the anxiety is asking (“What if my faith fails?” “What if I have sinned too much?” “What if I was never really saved?”), and how does the specific content of John 6:37 answer each form of the anxiety? And what additional texts from this lesson’s key texts, John 10:28–29, Hebrews 7:25, Romans 8:38–39, would you deploy alongside John 6:37 for the specific form of anxiety the person is experiencing?
- The lesson has presented the complete three-lesson case for the perseverance of the saints across Lessons 27, 28, and 29. As Unit 9 concludes, identify the single most important doctrinal insight from these three lessons that has most directly impacted your own understanding of the security of the believer. What did you believe before engaging these three lessons, and how has the doctrinal engagement shifted or

deepened or confirmed what you believed? What specific pastoral consequence follows from the insight, what specific change in your preaching, your counseling, your prayer, or your own spiritual life follows from the most significant doctrinal shift that Units 9's three lessons have produced?

Prayer Focus

Open this lesson's prayer time, and close Unit 9, with the full reading of Romans 8:31–39 as the corporate declaration of the community's theological and pastoral faith in the security of the believer. Read it slowly, as a series of rhetorical challenges and their comprehensive answers: "What then shall we say to these things?", what indeed? After three lessons establishing the perseverance of the saints from every angle of the biblical testimony, the answer is the same as Paul's: "If God is for us, who is against us?" Let the question land not as a rhetorical flourish but as the specific, personally-addressed challenge to every form of the insecurity-anxiety that the three lessons of Unit 9 have been addressing. God is for you. The Father who keeps, the Son who intercedes, the Spirit who seals, all three are for you. Who, then, can stand effectively against the comprehensive Trinitarian preservation that their combined ministry constitutes?

Pray the four rhetorical challenges of Romans 8:31–34 as the specific, prayer-directing answers to the four most common forms of security anxiety in your congregation. "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?", name the specific accusations, the specific failures, the specific sins that the enemy or the conscience is currently prosecuting against the specific members of your community. Then answer each accusation: "God is the one who justifies, this specific charge has been answered by the imputed righteousness that is as complete now as it was on the day it was pronounced." "Who is the one who condemns?", name the specific condemnations, the specific fears that the failure has jeopardized the standing. Then answer: "Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us, the completed death and the continuous intercession together constitute the comprehensive answer to every condemnation."

Pray John 6:37's "the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" as the specific, Christological pastoral word for every member of your community who is currently living under the anxiety of conditional security, whose assurance rises and falls with the quality of their spiritual performance, and whose specific failures produce the specific fear that the salvation has been jeopardized or lost. Name them before the Father, one by one, and for each one pray: "This one has come to You. You will certainly not cast her out. The Father who gave her to the Son willed that she not be lost; the Son who received her has committed to losing none; the Spirit who sealed her did so for the day of redemption. She is in the Father's hand. No one is able to snatch her out. And the *ou mē* of Your Son's promise is as absolute as His own character and as permanent as the covenant Your faithfulness has established."

Pray for those in your congregation who hold Arminian convictions, who believe that the salvation they have received is conditional on their sustained faithfulness, with the specific, charitable, doctrinally-grounded compassion that the lesson's call for theological charity requires. Pray not for their defeat in a theological argument but for their liberation from the specific, spiritually-debilitating anxiety that the conditional security position produces in those who take it seriously: the fear that every failure has jeopardized the salvation, the exhausting performance-orientation of the spiritual life lived under the constant threat of loss, and the inability to rest in the Father's hand because the hand's grip is understood to depend on the quality of the resting. Ask the Spirit to give them the specific, experiential, Spirit-attested assurance that Romans 8:16 describes, the testimony with their spirit that they are children of God, and to ground that assurance in the Father's faithfulness rather than in their own performance.

Close Unit 9 with the doxology of Jude 24–25 as the final corporate expression of the three lessons’ accumulated testimony. “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” The glory is His. The ability is His. The keeping is His. The blameless presentation is His gift. The great joy is His destination for you. The forever is His, before all time, and now, and to the last day. You will make it to the end, not because of the strength of your grip but because of the faithfulness of the God who is able to keep and who will make you stand. This is the gospel’s specific, endurance-enabling, assurance-producing, doxologically-expressed word for the trembling believer at the end of Unit 9: go forward in the humble confidence of those who know whose hand is holding them, and let the holding be the occasion for the praise and the glory and the majesty that belong to the only God and Savior forever.

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out... For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

John 6:37, 40, NASB 1995

Key Texts: John 6:37–40; 10:27–30; 14:16–17; Romans 8:31–39; 11:29; Hebrews 6:4–9; 7:25; 10:26–31; 1 John 2:19; Ephesians 4:30; 1:13–14; 2 Corinthians 5:17

Soli Deo Gloria
To God Alone Be the Glory

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