

The Book Of Revelation Study 74

BLESSED ARE THE DEAD

Revelation 14:12-13 (NKJV)

¹² *Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*

¹³ *Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."*

The Bible has much to say about happiness.

The familiar New Testament word *makarios* (*blessed*) refers to spiritual joy, bliss, fulfillment, and satisfaction.

It describes an inner joy that is the fulfillment of every longing, a serene, untouchable, unassailable contentment and peace.

The Old and New Testament reveal much about such blessedness.

Psalms 1:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ *Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;*

² *But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.*

Psalms 65:4 (NKJV)

⁴ *Blessed is the man You choose, And cause to approach You, That he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Of Your holy temple.*

Matthew 5:3-12 (NKJV)

³ *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

⁴ *Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.*

⁵ *Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.*

⁶ *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.*

⁷ *Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.*

⁸ *Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.*

⁹ *Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.*

¹⁰ *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

¹¹ *"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.*

¹² *Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

James 1:12 (NKJV)

¹² *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

And there are so many more;

But the most startling pronouncement of blessing in all of Scripture is found here in *verse 13*. Amazingly this second of seven beatitudes in Revelation pronounces blessing on the dead. *(1:3; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14)*

Such a thought is incomprehensible to most people, who view death as something to be avoided. “Blessed are the living” would seem a more appropriate motto for most people.

The obvious question that the text provokes is “Why are these dead blessed?”

The answer it presents is twofold; the dead in view here are;

Blessed because of how they lived
Blessed because of how they died.

HOW THEY LIVED

Revelation 14:12 (NKJV)

¹² *Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*

The phrase **the perseverance of the saints** introduces one of the most important and most comforting doctrines in Scripture.

It expresses the truth that all those whom God has elected, called. And justified will never lose their faith, but will persevere in it until death.

That provides assurance, hope, and joy to every true believer in Jesus Christ and brings an end to fear and doubt.

It also reveals that believers’ deaths are blessed because death ushers them into the glories of heaven.

Now some refer to this as the doctrine of eternal security; other dub it the “once saved, always saved” teaching. While those definitions are accurate, they do not express this truth as clearly as the biblical phrase, **the perseverance of the saints**.

That statement emphasizes the reality that God keeps His own saints by sustaining their faith to the very end, no matter what occurs.

True saving faith in its very nature is eternal and cannot be lost or destroyed.

The persevering character of saving faith is never more clearly and powerfully seen than in this passage. No group of believers ever has faced or ever will face stronger assaults on their faith than the Tribulation saints.

The tribulation believers will endure the most intense persecution in human history.

Jesus said;

Matthew 24:22 (NKJV)

²² *And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.*

God will set a limit on the Tribulation so that the elect will not suffer more than they can bear.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV)

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

There is no stronger evidence that saving faith perseveres than the reality that the most tested believers in history will maintain their saving faith until the end.

The biblical doctrine of the perseverance of the saints rests on five solid, unshakable pillars.

The first proof of the truthfulness of that doctrine is that God's promise established it.

Psalms 37:23-34 (NKJV)

²³ The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.

²⁴ Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand.

²⁵ I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread.

²⁶ He is ever merciful, and lends; And his descendants are blessed.

²⁷ Depart from evil, and do good; And dwell forevermore.

²⁸ For the LORD loves justice, And does not forsake His saints; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off.

²⁹ The righteous shall inherit the land, And dwell in it forever.

³⁰ The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, And his tongue talks of justice.

³¹ The law of his God is in his heart; None of his steps shall slide.

³² The wicked watches the righteous, And seeks to slay him.

³³ The LORD will not leave him in his hand, Nor condemn him when he is judged.

³⁴ Wait on the LORD, And keep His way, And He shall exalt you to inherit the land; When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it.

Isaiah also celebrated this great truth;

Isaiah 43:1-7 (NKJV)

¹ But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine.

² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.

³ For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place.

⁴ Since you were precious in My sight, You have been honored, And I have loved you; Therefore I will give men for you, And people for your life.

⁵ Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, And gather you from the west;

⁶ I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, And My daughters from the ends of the earth--

⁷ Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."

Isaiah 45:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ But Israel shall be saved by the LORD With an everlasting salvation; You shall not be ashamed or disgraced Forever and ever.

Isaiah 51:6 (NKJV)

⁶ Lift up your eyes to the heavens, And look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, The earth will grow old like a garment, And those who dwell in it will die in like manner; But My salvation will be forever, And My righteousness will not be abolished.

God also promises in the New Testament that salvation is eternal;

John 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:36 (NKJV)

³⁶ He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

John 5:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

1 John 2:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ And this is the promise that He has promised us--eternal life.

The second truth upon which the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints rests is that of God's purpose assures it.

Jesus declared;

John 6:37-40 (NKJV)

³⁷ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

³⁹ This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.

⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

God's promise rests upon His sovereign purpose or plan;

Here it is plainly stated that His will is that none of those whom He gives to His Son should be lost.

Jesus reinforces that truth;

John 6:44 (NKJV)

⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

All who come to saving faith in Jesus will be part of the "*resurrection of life*" (John 5:29)

None will be lost. Romans also teaches that there are no breaks in the process of salvation;

Romans 8:28-30 (NKJV)

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

²⁹ *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

³⁰ *Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

All those who God foreknew are predestined, called, justified, and glorified.

From its beginning in eternity past to its conclusion in eternity future, the salvation process is an uninterrupted continuity;

There is no possibility of anyone dropping out along the way.

Paul wrote:

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV)

⁶ *being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;*

1 Corinthians 1:7-9 (NKJV)

⁷ *so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

⁸ *who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

⁹ *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

In Romans he added:

Romans 11:29 (NKJV)

²⁹ *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

What God purposes, He will carry out.

The third truth of the doctrine of perseverance of the saints is that God's power guarantees it.

God's power that transforms believers into new creations will sustain them, so that they can never be lost.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18a (NKJV)

¹⁷ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

¹⁸ *Now all things are of God,*

Listen to Jesus;

John 10:27-29 (NKJV)

²⁷ *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*

²⁸ *And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.*

²⁹ *My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.*

And also; *Jude 1:24-25 (NKJV)*

²⁴ *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,*

²⁵ *To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.*

The fourth truth the saints will persevere because salvation is wholly by God's grace

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*
⁹ *not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Since we did nothing to earn it, we can do nothing to keep it.

Paul said to the Thessalonians;

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NKJV)

²³ *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

After that he then explained how this safekeeping would be accomplished:

1 Thessalonians 5:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ *He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.*

To argue that saving faith can die or be lost, contradicts God's promise, purpose, power, and grace. Believers have been:

1 Peter 1:3-5 (NKJV)

³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*
⁴ *to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,*
⁵ *who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

The fifth truth is that believers persevere by faith, fear, love, obedience, and by turning away from sin.

By Faith:

1 Peter 1:5 (NKJV)

⁵ *who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

1 John 5:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.*

⁵ *Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

By Fear:

Jeremiah 32:40 (NKJV)

⁴⁰ *And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.*

By Love:

Ephesians 6:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ *Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.*

By Obedience:

John 8:31-32 (NKJV)

³¹ *Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.*

³² *And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

By Repenting and turning away from sin:

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NKJV)

¹ *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

Romans 6:12-14 (NKJV)

¹² *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.*

¹³ *And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

¹⁴ *For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

All those means are granted by God, who then exhorts believers to manifest them in their lives.

The doctrine of perseverance must not be misconstrued as teaching that believers will be eternally saved regardless of their belief or behavior.

What it does teach is that, as noted, true believers will continue in the faith.

Justification will be followed by sanctification that leads to glorification.

The perseverance of the Tribulation **saints** will be evident because they will **keep the commandments of God**. **That genuine** saving faith will result in such obedience is the clear teaching of Scripture.

A second way the Tribulation saints will manifest perseverance will be through **their faith in Jesus**.

They will remain loyal, even under the tyrannical reign of Antichrist.

Even the threat of execution will not cause them to abandon their faith in the Lord Jesus.

Like the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11, they will maintain their testimony until the end, even if that end is a horrifying martyrdom.

Why are these faithful dead believers blessed? Because they lived pure, noble, purposeful, obedient, rich, joyous, exemplary lives.

They lived life to the fullest in faith and obedience to God.

Even if there were no heaven, that would still be the best way to live.

But there is a heaven to follow this life for God's people:

Therefore the deaths of the Tribulation saints will also be eternally blessed.

Next we will study how they died.