

PERSEVERANCE AS INTERPERSONAL

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Christian growth (sanctification) relates to perseverance in Christ because continued growth safeguards against apostasy. The writer of Hebrews suggests interpersonal activity as a way to persevere. He speaks of fellowship with the faithful, imitation of the faithful, and service to all mankind (chs. **10-13**).

Personal relationships also connect with perseverance in that how we relate is equally relevant all along the way—at life's end as much as at any previous time. Not only is how we relate relevant, it is determinative at each point along the way. Present relationships are good or bad in terms of present good or bad motives, attitudes, and behaviors. It is not good now because it was good before—as if past acts could override present behavior. Like any social relationship, fellowship with God in the end is not an average figured across the whole life span; it consists of how things are in the end. It is not determined by making judgment at some point in the past; it is determined by judgment at the end (the final “now”). For the same reasons, previous “salvation” relationship does not preclude present alienation any more than bad past behavior destroys present reconciliation (Ezekiel **18:21-24**). There is no thought of forming a social bond that somehow remains permanent despite subsequently departing from those behaviors that were required for establishing it. The state at the end is not the result of permanent miraculous change of substantive nature (condition); neither is it a permanent legal status irreversible by decree. It is an interpersonal relationship made permanent by perseverant repentance and faithful forgiveness.

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