

The Benefits of Salvation Series

Perseverance of the Saints Part One

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The term “perseverance of the saints” refers to a doctrine of Scripture that says that those whom God has accepted in Christ, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace but will certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved.

This perseverance of the saints does not depend upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Holy Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which arise the certainty and infallibility thereof.

Nonetheless, believers may, through the temptations of Satan and the world, the prevalence of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sin; and, for a time, continue therein. During that time they incur God’s displeasure and grieve His Holy Spirit. They come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves. (*Westminster Confession of Faith, SVII/i-iii*)

While God’s people are growing in holiness through the power of the Holy Spirit, they are also “being kept by the power of God through faith for [the] salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1.5) This “keeping” work of God effects the perseverance or preservation of the saints. I like to say: We persevere because the Holy Spirit preserves.

This does not mean that everyone who professes to be a Christian is assured of eternal life. It does not mean that everyone who satisfies some examining body of a local church with respect to eligibility for church membership is secure for eternity. Hypocrites and unregenerates may deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God and in the estate of salvation. This alone is sobering, and should be.

Perseverance of the saints means that every true child of God, i.e., every person whom the Father chose in Christ before the foundation of the world and for whom Christ died, whom the Father effectually called in time by His word and Spirit unto repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ, and whom He consequently justified and adopted into His family, and who is consequently growing in grace, will never come into condemnation. *That* person can never be finally lost, nor will that person ever be finally lost. *That* person is eternally secure, and will certainly persevere by virtue of God’s preserving grace, in the state of salvation unto the end and be finally and eternally saved.

The biblical material. The Bible gives much assurance to the true child of God that once he/she is truly and genuinely saved, he/she is saved forever.

Psalm 37.23,24 *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand.* NKJV

Psalm 73.1-2, 23-26 *Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. ²But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. ... ²³Yet I am always with You; You hold my right hand. ²⁴You guide me with Your counsel, and later receive me in glory. ²⁵Whom have I in heaven but You? And on earth I desire no one besides You. ²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (Read all of Psalm 73.)*

John 6.37-40. Jesus said, "All that the Father **gives** to Me [a reference to the Father's effectual summons in time, which in turn is grounded in His eternal election] **will come** to Me [this statement underscores His summons's irresistibility]; and **the one who comes to Me I will never cast out** [ou mh ekbalw, a double negative for emphasis] because I have come down from heaven not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that **all that He has given Me, I will lose none** of it but raise it in the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life, and I will raise him in the last day."

Note that it is the Father's will for Jesus that He should lose none of all those whom the Father savingly gives Him. If the Son should fail to save all whom the Father gives Him or finally to fail to consummate their salvation in the Eschaton by raising them up from death, He will have violated His Father's will for Him. **From initiation to consummation, salvation rests in the faith and power of Jesus.**

John 10.28, 29: *And I give to [My sheep who follow Me] eternal life, and they shall never perish [again, another double negative for emphasis ou mh], and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father who has given them to Me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*

Those who say the sheep are not secure will point to verse 27 because only His sheep must continue to follow Him. But one does not ultimately become one of Christ's sheep in the first place. *John 10.26 Jesus says: "you do not believe, because you are not My sheep."* This is basically, you don't believe because you don't belong. In other words, the Father must have elected them and summoned them first before they can come to Him, i.e., believe in Him. Jesus said emphatically, *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."* (10.27) A true believer will follow and continue to follow as a matter of course.

Romans 5.8b-10. Christ died for us while we were sinners and enemies of God so how much more certain, having been justified and having been reconciled by His work on the cross shall we be saved from the wrath to come by His life lived for us. Jesus' life of intercession all the more guarantees our future and final salvation.

Matthew 7:20-23 *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. ²¹Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the*

will of my Father which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. KJV

“Mt 7:23 I **never knew you**. "**I never knew you**" must be accepted in its deeper signification of "recognizing the disciples". Augustine says that for Christ to say, "**I never knew you**", is only another way of saying, "**You never knew me**". **Depart from me**, ye that work iniquity. In spite of all their professions they had been evil doers.”
<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org › Matthew-7-23> They practiced lawlessness.

Romans 8.30-39. KJV

³⁰ Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

³¹ What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

³² He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

³³ Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

³⁴ Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

³⁶ As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

³⁷ Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

³⁸ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul represents the glorification of those who were predestinated, called, and justified by the aorist tense in Greek, intimating the certainty of its accomplishment. If saints may fall away and be finally lost, then the called and the justified may fall away and be lost. But Paul says that won't happen and cannot happen. It is God who calls and justifies and also glorifies. Paul gives 5 rhetorical questions for us to ponder:

1. If God is for us, who is able to be against us?

2. He who spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? [necessary to the fulfillment of His purpose for us]
3. Who will bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.
4. Who is he who condemns? Not Christ. He died and was raised and is at God's right hand interceding for us.
5. What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Not death or life or troubles or hardship or persecution or other dangers. God is working all things together for our good and we are super-conquerors through Him who loved us. Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. That includes ourselves!

We'll keep looking into this...

Mary Craig, D. Min.

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