

The Benefits of Salvation Series

Perseverance of the Saints Part Two

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There is a freedom that comes into a true believer when “born again.” He/she can find assurance of salvation and rest in that struggling worry of whether or not he/she truly has eternal life. The Lord delivers us from the hand of our enemies that we might serve before Him without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives. (Luke 1:73-75)

Dr. Robert L. Reymond lays it out well.

Romans 8:30-39. 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 can 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!

1 Corinthians 1: 8, 9. God will confirm. God is faithful.

1 Corinthians 3:15. If a believer's work is burned up in the judgment, he will suffer loss but he himself will be saved, but so as through fire.

Philippians 1:6. **He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.** Do you believe God and do you believe that salvation rests in and with God?

Hebrews 7:25: **He is able to save forever those who come to God through Him because He ever lives for the purpose of interceding for them.** Do you think about Jesus as your High Priest praying for you?

1 Peter 1:5. You are **kept by the power of God through faith for the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**

But let's engage in some friendly fire. www.mcmthfr.org is one of our MCM web sites. It is named for "the friendly fire room," a place where we can peacefully hash out different viewpoints.

Arminian Christians believe that Christians can fall from the estate of grace and be finally lost. They purport that the Christian is secure only if he/she perseveres in the faith to the end. They cite: Matthew 24:13; John 8:31; John 15:6; 1 Corinthians 15:1, 2; Colossians 1:22, 23; Hebrews 3:6, 14; Hebrews 10:36, 39. The conditions include enduring to the end, abiding in Christ and His word, and continuing in or holding fast to the faith. These conditions **are** essential to salvation, yes; and where they do not exist those professing Christ **cannot** expect to be finally saved.

This is the position of those who oppose Arminian thought:

One cannot base security of salvation on church membership or by assuming one is elect. Neither the members of a church nor the elect can be saved unless they persevere in holiness and they cannot do that without continual watchfulness and effort. The Arminian contends that he may in fact not persevere to the end and be finally lost after all. Those opposing Arminian thought are convinced that the true believer will in fact persevere and to that end will take seriously the warnings and conditions for salvation in Scripture.

Why then the admonitions, the warnings, and conditions? It is because God ordains not only the end but also all the means to the end. One of the ways whereby God effects the means of perseverance in the elect is to warn them of the consequences of their **not** persevering to the end. The scriptural admonition is set forth to insure that saints persevere. Faith listens to admonitions and then travels the road of abiding in Christ. True confidence looks for everything from grace. The admonitions are at the same time both remembrances and a calling. It warns of potential error and exhorts to keep on the true path.

Consider Paul. In Acts 27 God assured Paul that there would be no loss of life among them, but only of the ship with an impending shipwreck. Yet Paul warned the centurion and the soldiers that unless the sailors who were trying to escape in the lifeboat remained in the ship, they who remained in the lifeboat could not be saved. (27:31) The end had been proclaimed, but Paul knew that the means was for all to remain on board the ship. The warning had its desired effect and all were brought safely to land (27:44).

The second class of passages which Arminians use to prove that Christians may finally be lost is Romans 14:15 and 1 Corinthians 8:11. Paul formally employs the "language of perdition" in these contexts in order to impress upon the stronger brother the serious spiritual harm he may inflict upon the weaker brother if he is not sensitive to the latter's scruples. However, certain details would cause us to stop short of the dire conclusion which Arminians wish to extract from them. God's warning prevents that of which He warns. The Bible teaching that those for whom Christ died shall perish if they violate their conscience prevents their transgressing or brings them to repentance. **God's purposes embrace the means as well as the end.** If the means fail, the end will fail. **God secures the end by securing the means.** The event spoken of is conditional. There is not only a possibility, but an absolute certainty of their perishing if they fall away; but this is precisely what God has promised to prevent.

The third class of verses Arminians use affirm in so many words that Christians who have clearly been in the faith either have fallen, may fall, or shall fall away from the estate of salvation and be finally lost.

Matthew 24:10, 12

1 Timothy 1:19 **having faith and a good conscience, which certain having thrust away, concerning the faith did make shipwreck, YLT**

1 Timothy 4:1 **Now [But] the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ESV**

Hebrews 6:4-6 (a hypothetical)

2 Peter 2

What do these passages teach? They teach that there is such a thing as “temporary faith,” which is not true faith in Christ at all. Some may even be called by the ministry of the Word and may have some common operations of the Spirit yet they never truly come unto Christ and therefore cannot be saved. There is no real spiritual union with Christ. Think of the parable of the sower and the four kinds of soil. Such persons were never elected, effectually called, and regenerated and are therefore not true believers. They fall away from the faith in the crisis. 1 John 2:19

So how can a person have any assurance of salvation? How does anyone know he/she is not just deceiving himself/herself? A person may believe he is a Christian when in fact he is not.

False assurance undergirds temporary faith and the belief that one is in the favor of God and the state of salvation when one is truly not. In this case, however, **some vital fruit or evidence of genuine salvation would be missing from their “Christian” experience** which would put to the lie their assurance as well as their profession. For example, in Hebrews 6 the missing fruit was the total absence of growth in understanding even the elementary teaching about Christ, a fruit that surely “accompanies salvation” (cf Hebrews 5:11-14; 6:9), while in the 2 Peter 2 case, the missing fruit was the complete absence in the false teachers of any holy religious affections for they are greedy and deceptive, unrighteous, follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature, despise authority, are arrogant, carouse in broad daylight, etc.

False hopes and carnal presumptions are behind temporary faith, but a true believer can have certain assurance. Consider:

Romans 8:38

2 Timothy 1:12 **For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. NKJV**

1 John 2:3 **Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. NKJV**

1 John 4:13 **By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ESV**

1 John 5:13 **I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. ESV**

Assurance of salvation and of eternal life springs from:

1. an intelligent understanding of the nature of salvation (2 Peter 1:2, 3, 5-6, 8; 3:18)

2. the recognition of the immutability of the gifts and calling of God (Romans 11:29)
3. obedience to the commandments of God (1 John 2:3)
4. self-examination (2 Corinthians 13:5)
5. and the inward witness of the Holy Spirit who Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. (Romans 8:15, 16; Gal 4:6)

What are we to do? Rightly use the means of grace. Be diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing us (2 Peter 1:10). Know that if we get off track, God will not permit a true believer to persist in immaturity or sin and still enjoy unabated peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Spirit (Ps 32:4; 38:2; 51:12). God will chasten His “true sons” (Hebrews 12:6-8) and His conviction of sin will keep increasing. God will remove the light of His countenance and will not restore that until we humble ourselves, confess our sins, beg pardon, and ask that He establish our faith in Christ and grant the repentance unto life.

But also know this. No matter how bad it gets, no matter how severe the temptations, a true believer is never in the condition that preceded the exercise of faith. A true believer can never go back and become an unbeliever. A true believer is born out of God and forever changed. There will not be utter despair, but God will continue to support wayward children even while chastening them when they fail to grow or when they fall into sin (Luke 22:31, 32; 54-61; 24:34; Mark 16:7; John 21:15-19). Only those with false hopes and carnal presumptions, with temporary faith, will perish.

Arminians do a disservice to say that those whom the Father elected, called, and justified, and to whom He gives along with the gift of His Son all things necessary to their salvation and those whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated and sealed, etc. can still finally lose their salvation and never be glorified because of some action on their part. It places every Christian beyond the pale of final salvation since it makes his attainment of final salvation turn ultimately upon his own vacillating human will as he seeks to keep himself in the faith. But no Christian is capable of keeping himself through sheer force of will in the state of salvation.

To summarize: The true believer perseveres because God preserves; they are kept by the power of God. True believers can neither totally nor finally fall away from the estate of grace. We must remember that the love of God is unchangeable. He decrees and covenants to give true believers perseverance. There is an inseparable union with Christ, a vital spiritual union. Jesus Christ, a faithful High Priest in the Order of Melchizedek, continually intercedes for them. They are born-out-of-God ones, and the Spirit and seed of God abides in them. They are kept through faith unto salvation. Jesus Christ is the Author and Finisher of faith. (*Larger Catechism*, Ques. 79).

“That the Christian, by virtue of all the salvific provisions of God, will be preserved until his final glorification is beyond doubt. What pastors must understand is that the criterion of true discipleship is *continuance in Jesus’ words*, and that the test of a true faith is *perseverance in true piety* unto the end. Much of the problem which they have with people in their congregations who profess Christ but who live ungodly, uncommitted lives could be redressed if they would proclaim the lordship of Christ and the nature of true discipleship, and make clear that, while the saint of God will be preserved by the power of God, he *will also persevere in a godly walk* throughout his life unto the end. And where that godly walk in true piety is not forthcoming, no professing Christian has the right to assume that he is in fact a Christian, and no pastor has the right to assure him that he is simply a ‘carnal Christian.’ To the contrary, he must be counseled to

examine himself to see if he is in the faith, and if he insists that he is, then he must be counseled that he must ask God to grant repentance unto life and faith in Jesus Christ.” (Reymond, page 794)

Freedom is fragile. As to progressive salvation, true believers walk the narrow way, not veering into legalism on the one side or into licentiousness/license on the other side. True believers desire to do what pleases God, walk in the Holy Spirit, and follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Here's how David DePra puts it:

Legalism -- Faith in my works.
License -- Faith without works.
Liberty -- by grace through faith unto good works.

My last point today - Every command of God carries within it a promise, a guarantee. For example, the true believer WILL have no other gods before Him. When God says, “And I will be his God, and he will be My son,” He means it; He makes it so. He that calls us effectually is faithful; and He also will bring it to pass. Believe in Jesus. Believe Jesus. Believe what Jesus believes. It's all God.

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