

Perseverance of the Saints

November 4, 2018

From Article V. God's Purpose of Grace: 2000 Baptist Faith & Message:

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

From Chapter 17 - Of the Perseverance of the Saints: Charleston Confession of Faith

1. Those whom God hath accepted in the beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, and given the precious faith of his elect unto, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved, seeing the gifts and callings of God are without repentance, whence he still begets and nourisheth in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit unto immortality; and though many storms and floods arise and beat against them, yet they shall never be able to take them off that foundation and rock which by faith they are fastened upon; notwithstanding, through unbelief and the temptations of Satan, the sensible sight of the light and love of God may for a time be clouded and obscured from them, yet he is still the same, and they shall be sure to be kept by the power of God unto salvation, where they shall enjoy their purchased possession, they being engraven upon the palm of his hands, and their names having been written in the book of life from all eternity.

(John 10:28, 29; Phil. 1:6; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 John 2:19; Ps. 89:31, 32; 1 Cor. 11:32; Mal. 3:6)

2. This perseverance of the saints depends not 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 and union with him, the oath of God, the abiding of his Spirit, and the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.

(Rom. 8:30, 9:11, 16; Rom. 5:9, 10; John 14:19; Heb. 6:17, 18; 1 John 3:9; Jer. 32:40)

3. And though they may, through the temptation of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God's displeasure and grieve his Holy Spirit, come to have their graces and comforts impaired, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves, yet shall they renew their repentance and be preserved through faith in Christ Jesus to the end.

(Matt. 26:70, 72, 74; Isa. 64:5, 9; Eph. 4:30; Ps. 51:10, 12; Ps. 32:3, 4; 2 Sam. 12:14; Luke 22:32, 61, 62)

Summary:

1. Perseverance, like all the other graces of God, is a gift.
2. Perseverance of the Saints does not teach that man stops sinning completely, but that when he does, God continues to work repentance in his heart so that he ultimately does not fall away.
3. It is the power of God that saves and it is the power of God that keeps one saved.
4. Not everyone who professes salvation possesses salvation.

"If you have it, you never lose it; if you 'lose' it, you never had it" R.C. Sproul

Three sets of believers or one?

And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.' Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience. (Luke 8:4-15)

Perseverance in faith and obedience is a must

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, **if indeed you continue in the faith**, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. (Col 1:21-23)

For we have come to share in Christ, **if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end**. (Heb 3:14)

Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that **when you have done the will of God** you may receive what is promised. (Heb 10:35-36)

Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. **But the one who endures to the end will be saved**. (Mat 10:21-22)

And then **many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another**. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. **But the one who endures to the end will be saved**. (Mat 24:10-13)

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for **if they had been of us**, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. (1Jn 2:19)

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: **whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother**. (1Jn 3:9-10)

There are people in the visible church that do not persevere:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times **some will depart from the faith** by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, (1Ti 4:1)

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to **fall away from the living God**. (Heb 3:12)

This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, **some have made shipwreck of their faith**, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. (1Ti 1:18-20)

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and **from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things**, to draw away the disciples after them. (Act 20:29-30)

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, **'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'** (Mat 7:21-23)

God allows Christians to fall into sin only so far:

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And **when you have turned again**, strengthen your brothers." Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me." (Luk 22:31-34)

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. **If he listens to you**, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (Mat 18:15-17)

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, **you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord**. (1Co 5:1-5)

God gives perseverance through testing and discipline

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge-- even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you-- so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **who will sustain you to the end**, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1Co 1:4-9)

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will **bring it to completion** at the day of Jesus Christ. (Php 1:6)

Now to him who is able to **keep you from stumbling** and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, (Jud 1:24)

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And **let steadfastness have its full effect**, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (Jas 1:2-4)

But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined **so that we may not be condemned** along with the world. (1Co 11:32)

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. (Heb 12:7-8)

How do we respond?

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you fail to meet the test! (2Co 13:5)

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Php 2:12-13)

For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (Rom 8:13-14)

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2Pe 1:3-11)

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. (Jas 1:22-25)