

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER

Introduction

- Definition: God sovereignly preserves true believers in faith so that no one is ever lost
- Those whom God has saved WILL be kept for final salvation
- This doctrinal truth is often referred to as the Perseverance of the Saints in the TULIP acrostic

Some Hold that Believers Can Lose Their Salvation

- Some denominations teach that Christians can fall away and lose their salvation
- They hold that God does not always prevent some who were born again from losing their salvation... That some believers are capable of losing their salvation because the human will remains free and may choose to abandon faith
- “The Protestant Arminians also hold that it is not only possible, but also a frequent fact, that persons truly regenerate, by neglecting grace and grieving the Holy Spirit with sin, fall away totally, and at length finally, from grace into eternal reprobation” (Conf. of the Remonstrants, 11. 7.)
- They hold that in their free will they have chosen to be saved and in their free will they can also choose to reject the faith
- Thus, it is man’s faith and man’s free will and man’s choice that determines who is saved and who perseveres not God’s sovereignty

What About Those Verses that Seem to Imply Believers Can Lose Their Salvation?

Galatians 5:1-5 ~ It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. 4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

- What does Paul mean in vs. 4 that “you have fallen from grace?”
- Some of the people to whom Paul was writing came from a Jewish background emphasizing legalistic self-effort to please God
- In the Galatian church, some were unable to set that background aside and were being taught by Judaizers that faith in Jesus Christ was not sufficient for complete salvation
- They believed that works of the law (i.e. circumcision) needed to be added to faith in order for it to be complete...they emphasized the Mosaic Law as the means to salvation
- Paul is combating this false teaching by pointing out its consequences:
 - Forfeit Christ’s work on your behalf (vs. 1-2)
 - Place yourself under obligation to keep the whole law (vs. 3)
 - Fall from grace (vs. 4)
 - Exclude yourself from God’s righteousness (vs. 5)
- Thus, Paul’s point is not that true believers lose their salvation, but that any attempt to be justified by the Law is to reject the way of grace

- He wasn't teaching that a person who had once been justified can become unjustified
- He was really dealing with an unbeliever who "fell from grace" by being exposed to the gracious truth of the Gospel and then turning their back on Christ

Hebrews 6:4-6 ~ For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and *then* have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

- Some understand this text as referring to true believers who have lost their salvation
- But Paul is addressing Jewish people similar to the legalistic Galatians...those who heard much about the Gospel but never committed their lives to Christ
- Paul gives a stern warning here to those who know the truth of God's saving grace in Christ – who perhaps have seen it change the lives of others – yet who turn around and walk away from full acceptance
- Paul describes the great advantages of being associated with the church in vs. 4-5...none of these terms though refer to salvation...in fact, none of them are used elsewhere in the NT for salvation
- These individuals had been wondrously blessed by God's enlightenment, by association with His Spirit, and by sampling His heavenly gifts, His Word, and His power...but still they did not believe
- So Paul warns them that for those who had experienced all of that and then fell away, it is impossible for them to be saved
- It is unbelievers who are danger of losing salvation, in the sense of losing the opportunity ever to receive it, not believers

John 15:1-2, 4, 6 ~ I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit...4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me...6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

- Again, some have understood the fruitless branches in vs. 2 which Christ takes away as referring to true believers who lose their salvation
- The phrase "in Me" in vs. 2 has contributed to this understanding...a person who is "in Christ" must be a genuine believer correct?
- Not necessarily! → All true believers bear fruit!
- Thus, these must be people who profess to be "in Christ" but who are only externally attached...it is possible to be a branch without abiding in the true vine
- Some only appear to be part of God's people (i.e. Rom 9:6 ~ they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; Matt 13:30, 38 ~ wheat vs. tares)
- Those who do not abide in Christ and have no living connection to Him are cast out (vs. 6)
- Thus, those referred to here are not true believers who lose their salvation but false believers who wrongly assume they are in Christ and are therefore lost

Matthew 12:31-32 ~ Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. 32 Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come.

- Some have concluded that believers are capable of committing the sin Jesus spoke of here and therefore being lost forever
- But again, the context is not referring to a believer, but an unbelievers present at the time of Christ's public ministry

- The religious leaders of Christ's day were claiming that Jesus got His power to perform miracles from Satan
- Obviously, this doesn't make sense since, if it was true that Jesus worked miracles in Satan's power, the devil would be destroying his own kingdom (vs. 26)
- The religious leaders' hatred and jealousy drove them to such twisted logic
- Thus, Jesus' rebuke in vs. 31-32 was meant for those Jewish leaders who had seen and heard all that Jesus had done and said, yet were still convinced it was satanic
- They betrayed the fact that they were truly in a hopeless state before God
- Therefore, this text cannot be used to conclude that believers can lose their salvation

True Believers Will Persevere to the End

- Usually the question is asked "Can a saved person lose their salvation?"
- But it is better to ask, "Can the work of God in a saved person's life be undone?"
- When asked this way, a proper response is:
 - There are no negative terms in Scripture such as: uncalled, dejustified, unadopted, unreconciled
 - There are no references in Scripture of passing from life back into death
- True believers will persevere to the end because that is what God willed to happen
- The Westminster Confession summarizes it this way:
 - 17.1 ~ They, whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved
 - 17.2 ~ 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; the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them

John 6:37-40 ~ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not 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 Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

- Notice that vs. 37 and 39 both contain the little word "all"
- Jesus does not say: This is the will of Him who sent Me, that I lose only a few of them...that I keep all but a couple...that only a few slip through the cracks
- No → Every single sinner whom the Father gives to the Son to be saved will also be kept eternally...no exceptions!
- If you are among those whom the Father has given as a gift to the Son, you WILL also be among those whom the Son keeps
- There is an unbreakable chain here – to be given by the Father to the Son to be saved is also to be kept saved by the Son eternally
- No part of that group, which the Father assigned to Christ in eternity past and gives to Him in time, will be lost!
- Christ promises in vs. 39 to lose none of what the Father has given Him
- "lose" = *apollumi* = ruin, destroy, lose, to suffer loss
- "Apollyon" (name for the captain of demons in Rev 9:11) gets his name from this word ...He is the destroyer

- But Jesus promises: “I lose nothing but raise it up on the last day”
- Not one is lost! Every single one whom the Father has chosen to give to the Son will be saved and will persevere!
- Why? → Notice who is responsible for not losing them: “I lose nothing” (vs. 39)
- The security of the believer depends on the strength of Christ! The Son holds on to them!
- It is the Son who keeps them...It is Christ who is responsible for keeping the believer secure

Sam Storms (Chosen for Life, pg 94): Their faith in Christ is eternal and irrevocable because that is the will of the Father, a will or a purpose that the whole of Christ’s person and work was designed to secure

Morris: It is one of the precious things about the Christian faith that our continuance in eternal life depends not on our feeble hold on Christ, but on his firm grip on us

- That’s Christ’s great promise here in vs. 39-40 ~ but raise it up on the last day...I Myself will raise him up on the last day
- This is the promise of resurrection...the promise that one day every believer, every one whom the Father has given to the Son will not only be saved, but also be brought to glory!....None will be lost!
- The elect will be kept and guarded to the very end!
- Everyone who truly believes in Christ will continue as a Christian until the final resurrection
- If our confidence in staying saved were based on our confidence that we would not sin and could keep ourselves from falling away, we wouldn’t be very confident
- We are capable of sinning even to point of losing our salvation if it were up to us
- So if it were up to our strength to persevere to guarantee our salvation, then we would have little hope of persevering
- But our hope is in Christ to keep us saved!
- Our hope is in Christ and His grace to keep us close to Him and not committing sin that would ultimately cause us to lose our salvation

I like to look at it this way: I'm walking the Christian life with my hand in God's hand. If my perseverance depended upon my holding tightly to God's hand, I would surely fall away because at some point I would let go. But I believe that the Scriptures teach us that God is holding my hand, and because he is holding my hand, I don't have to fear that I will fall ultimately and finally.

Sproul, Can a Sinning Christian Lose His Salvation? (monergism.com)

John 10:27-30 ~ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; 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. I and the Father are one.

- These verses may be the most clear verses in all of Scripture that no person who is genuinely saved will ever lose their salvation
- The thought that those whom the Father has given to the Son and whom the Son has laid his life down for would ever be lost is unthinkable
- Notice the forceful phrase in vs. 28 ~ they will never perish
- This phrase has a double negative in the Greek (*ou me*) which might be translated, “they shall certainly not perish forever”
- Literally: “they shall not, by no means ever perish”

- Notice:
 - No one will – vs. 28
 - No one is able – vs. 29
- Some may attempt to snatch them but they cannot succeed because the Son and the Father are united in purpose and power to keep them secure
- Notice also:
 - No one will snatch them out of MY hand – vs. 28
 - No one is able to snatch them out of the FATHER’S hand – vs. 29
- Notice there are 2 hands keeping believers saved: hands of Christ and hands of God
- God the Father stands behind God the Son in keeping the sheep in the fold
- Jesus holds us tightly....God holds us tightly

Let me illustrate the latter words of the text. There lie the children of God in the hand of Christ. Do you see that tightly fist-ed hand? They are safe enough there. Jesus says, “No one can snatch them out of my hand.” But see the Father, he puts his hand over the hand of Jesus! There, now: you are inside two hands, “And no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” Oh, the serene security of those who hear the voice of Christ, and whom he calls his sheep! A double-handed force keeps them safe against all danger. Tug away, Satan! You will never snatch them out of the hand of Jesus, and the hand of his Father!

Spurgeon, John 10:27-30 sermon

Romans 8:29-30 ~ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

- Notice the unbreakable chain in this text!

Romans 8:31-39 ~ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.” 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord

Philippians 1:6 ~ *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

1 Peter 1:5 ~ Who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Jude 24-25 ~ Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Only Those who Persevere are True Believers

- Those whose faith is not real will eventually fall away
- Thus, those who have come to genuine faith in Christ WILL continue in faith to the end

Matthew 10:22 ~ it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

John 8:31-32 ~ So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

Colossians 1:22-23 ~ yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

Hebrews 3:14 ~ For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end

Those Who Fall Away Show They Never Were Truly Saved

- There are many who profess to know Christ and may even give some external signs that make them appear to be believers
- But if they walk away from the faith, they show that they were never truly saved

Matthew 7:21-23 ~ Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’

Matthew 13:19-23 ~ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

1 John 2:19 ~ They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

Implications

1. There is a false “security of the believer”

- I.e. those who make a profession of faith but live a life no different than before

2. The security of the believer in Christ is not a license to sin

- There are some who use this doctrine to live a life of sinfulness and immorality
- They say: Well if I can’t lose my salvation, then I can live any way I want”

Romans 6:1-2 ~ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

3. The security of the believer in Christ should promote grateful worship of God

Romans 11:33-36 ~ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.