

Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints

1. Regeneration is the effectual work of God the Holy Spirit whereby He imparts into a soul, dead in trespass and sin, new life. The Baptist Confession of 1689 explains.

Chapter 10 Effectual Calling

“Those whom God has predestinated to life, He is pleased in His appointed and accepted time to effectually call by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death which they are in by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ. He enlightens their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God. He takes away their heart of stone and gives to them a heart of flesh. He renews their wills, and by His almighty power, causes them to desire and pursue that which is good. He effectually draws them to Jesus Christ, yet in such a way that they come absolutely freely, being made willing by His grace.

This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not on account of anything at all foreseen in man. It is not made because of any power or agency in the creature who is wholly passive in the matter. Man is dead in sins and trespasses until quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit. By this he is enabled to answer the call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed by it. This enabling power is no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead.”

2. Because the work of God in the soul is effectual, the heart that is converted will persevere in the sphere of saving faith.

Chapter 17

The Perseverance of the Saints

“Those whom God has accepted in the beloved, and has effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, and given the precious faith of His elect, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but they will certainly persevere in that state to the end and be eternally saved. This is because the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, and therefore He continues to beget and nourish in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the spirit which lead to immortality.

And though many storms and floods arise and beat against the saints, yet these things shall never be able to sweep them off the foundation and rock which they are fastened upon by faith. Even though, through unbelief and the temptations of Satan, the sight and feeling of the light and love of God may for a time be clouded and obscured from them, yet God is still the same, and they are sure to be kept by His power until their salvation is complete, when they shall enjoy the purchased possession which is theirs, for they are engraved upon the palm of His hands, and their names have been written in His Book of Life from all eternity.

This perseverance of the saints does not depend on them - that is, on their own free will. It rests upon the immutability of the decree of election, which flows from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father. It also rests upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, and upon the union which true saints have with Him.

It rests upon the oath of God, and upon the abiding of His Spirit. It depends upon the seed of God being within them and upon the very nature of the covenant of grace. All these factors give rise to the certainty and infallibility of the security and perseverance of the saints.

The saints may, through the temptation of Satan and the world, and because their remaining sinful tendencies prevail over them, and through their neglect of the means which God has provided to keep them, fall into grievous sins. They may continue in this state for some time, so that they incur God's displeasure, grieve His Holy Spirit, suffer the impairment of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened and their conscience wounded, and hurt and scandalize others. By this they will bring temporal judgments upon themselves. Yet they shall renew their repentance and be preserved, through faith in Christ Jesus, to the end."

3. More importantly, God will preserve those whom He has effectually called and regenerated based on Divine Initiative. .
 - *Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*
4. The new birth is the beginning of salvation, not the completion of it. The believer is to "go on" to a life of gospel obedience and perfection.
 - *Hebrews 6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God*
5. If a person stops obeying the gospel, if a person renounces their faith in Christ, they were never born of God. An outward profession of faith does not mean there is an actual possession of faith.
 - *1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*
 - *Isaiah 29:13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:*
 - *Matthew 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

6. Judas was known to be the Son of Perdition from the beginning. He was a professor of faith, and was able to perform miracles in the name of Christ, but he was not converted.
 - *John 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.*

7. The preservation of the saints is guaranteed, reflected in the High Priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17, and the confirmation of Scripture in John 18.
 - *John 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.*
 - *John 18:8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: 9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.*

8. The people of God have an inheritance that is reserved for them based on the completion of the Divine Initiative in salvation.
 - *Ephesians 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*
 - *1 Peter 1:4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,*

9. The doctrine of final preservation of the saints does not mean that Christians cannot fall into serious sin, for they can, and do. “*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*” (1 Cor. 10:12).
 - Noah became drunk.
 - Abraham lied.
 - Rebekah deceived her husband Jacob.
 - David committed murder.
 - Peter denied the Lord of Glory in public, with cursing, after being warned.
 - James and John had explosive tempers.

10. When this happens, the Lord disciplines the individuals severely, sometimes with an early death.
 - *Hebrews 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*

- *1 Corinthians 11:27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

11. Satan desires to destroy Christians, but he cannot. Christians may fall, but they return, and they are restored.

- *Luke 22:31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*
- *1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*

12. The true Christian can have a radical and serious fall, but not a final fall from grace. Church discipline will help restore a fallen Christian, even if that discipline involves excommunication.

- *2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*

A Case of Excommunication

- *1 Corinthians 5:1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. 2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?*

Restoration to Fellowship Based on Extravagant Forgiveness

- *2 Corinthians 2:5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. 6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. 7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. 8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.*

13. How should the church judge a person who has fallen into sin?

- Judge with charity. *Matthew 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged. 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. 3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*
- Judge righteously. *John 7:24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*
- Judge based on known facts. *Proverbs 18:13 He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.*
- Judge in love. *James 5:20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*

14. The Holy Spirit raises a soul from death unto heaven. Therefore, the Holy Spirit seals the believer, and He gives every person an earnest.

- *Ephesians 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.*
- *2 Corinthians 1:22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.*

15. “When God writes our names in the Lamb’s Book of Life, He does not do it with an eraser handy” (R. C. Sproul).

16. The security of the believer, and the believer’s confidence of final salvation, is ultimately rooted in the continuing work of Jesus Christ who acts as our High Priest, and our Sanctifier.

- *Hebrews 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*
- *1 Corinthians 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*