

BAHRAIN REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH
Perseverance / Preservation of the Saints

December 6, 2024

Preliminary

Issue: With so many forces besetting the Christian way, how secure is his salvation? Can a Christian lose salvation?

Current Wrong Views:

1. Salvation may be lost, and is renewable

Point: Salvation may be lost through grievous sin and the denial of faith, but it can also be renewed if decided by man

[Charles Finney, *Systematic Theology*: Lecture 47] – “It is not intended that saints, or the truly regenerate, cannot fall from grace, and be finally lost, by natural possibility. It must be naturally possible for all moral agents to sin at any time. Saints on earth can by natural possibility apostatize and fall, and be lost. Were not this naturally possible, there would be no virtue in perseverance. It is not intended, that the true saints are in no danger of apostasy and ultimate damnation. For, humanly speaking, there may be, and doubtless is, the greatest danger in respect to many, if not of all of them in the only sense in which danger is predicable of any event whatever, that they will apostatize, and be ultimately lost.”

2. Eternal Security of Salvation

Note: Intending to mean that salvation cannot be lost, it is not descriptive enough

Point: It results in a shallow and static acceptance of one's saved state regardless of life... “*once-saved-always-saved*”

➤ Simply based on a single decision... leads to a false assurance

Present Logic: “I’m saved, because I asked Jesus into my heart. And while I might not be living for Him now, I’m going to heaven because I prayed the prayer and walked an aisle.”

[RT Kendall, *Once Saved Always Saved*, 19] – “Whoever once believes that Jesus was released from the dead, and confesses that Jesus is Lord, will go to heaven when he dies. But I will not stop there. Such a person will go to heaven when he dies no matter what work (or lack of work) *may accompany such faith*... [p 52-53] - I therefore state categorically that the person who is saved - who confesses that Jesus is Lord and believes in his heart that God raised Him from the dead - will go to heaven when he dies no matter what work (or lack of work) may accompany such faith. In other words, no matter what sin (or absence of Christian obedience) may accompany such faith.”

Aftermath: The promised of “*O-S-A-S*” is an inducement to carnal living and compromise

Historical Evangelical Doctrine

[1689 BCF, WCF, 17.1] – “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 fail from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved...”

Supporting Texts: Jn 10:28-29; Phil 1:6; 2 Tim. 2:19; 2 Pt. 1:5-10; 1 Jn 2:19

1. The Triune God preserves His salvation favors on believers

[1689 BCF, 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 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 arises also the certainty and infallibility thereof”

(a) The Father's purpose and power

➤ Romans 8:28-30, 38, 39 = The origin in divine purpose will have its finality in the saints' glorification

➤ John 10:27-29 = That nothing can remove the sheep's salvation is because no one is greater than God

Point: Since men are called and given faith because of this immutable decree, they will continue to be effectually called and given faith till the end... Mt 24:22, 24, 31; Rom 9:11; 11:2a, 29; Eph 1:5-11

➤ To lose anyone among those on whom God set His eternal purpose is to suggest that God's purpose has failed

(b) The Son's purchased redemption

➤ Titus 2:14 = The efficacy of the death of Christ is measured by its intended effect

➤ 1 John 3:8 = That intended effect is the total defeat of the Devil through the redemption of His people

Argument: Should anyone for whom Christ died fail in salvation is to suggest an incomplete atonement.

➤ Failed in the purpose for which He died... Jn 6:37; 10:14-18; 27-30

➤ Failed in the purpose for which He was raised... Rom 4:24, 25

➤ Failed in the purpose for which He now intercedes in the presence of the Father... Rom 8:31-34; Heb 7:25

(c) The Spirit's keeping grace

Note: The indwelling of the Spirit is not temporary, but permanent... Eph 2:22; 1 Cor 3:16; Eze 36:27

➤ The Spirit distinct work: sanctification until glory... 2 Thes 2:13

➤ The Spirit will never fail in his work of sealing (ownership and protection)... Eph 1:13, 14; 4:30

Point: The possession of the Spirit ensures resurrection in Christ... Rom 8:9-11

[Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3.16.8] – “Perseverance...is due to the purpose of God [in saving men and thereby bringing glory to his name], to the work of Christ [in canceling men's debt and earning their righteousness], to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit [in sealing men in salvation and leading them in God's ways], and to the primal source of all, the infinite, mysterious, and immutable love of God”

Conclusion: The infallibility of the covenant of grace and the dependability of the oath of God is not liable to failure.

Biblical Presentation:

Philippians 1:6 = *he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ*

➤ The work of salvation in the heart or soul was initiated by Christ, not by the human person.

Ephesians 2:10 = *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*

Hebrews 12:2 = *...the founder and perfecter of our (the elect's) faith.*

John 10:28, 29 = *I give them eternal life, 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*

Romans 8:28-30, 39 = [None] *will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord...* cf. Jn 17:12

[Boettner, *Predestination*, 182.] – “This doctrine does not stand alone but is a necessary part of the Calvinistic system of theology. The doctrines of Election and Efficacious Grace logically imply the certain salvation of those who receive these blessings. If God has chosen men absolutely and unconditionally to eternal life, and if His Spirit effectively applies to them the benefits of redemption, the inescapable conclusion is that these persons shall be saved.”

2. The evidenced of God's preservation in the Christian life

(a) Perseverance in faith and holiness is the evidence of true conversion

John 8:31 = “*If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed*”

Col 1:22, 23 = “*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*”

Heb 3:14 = “*For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end*”

Heb 12:14 = “*Strive for peace with everyone, and for holiness without which no one will see the Lord*”

Self examination: Without that holiness, no man should presume that he has been genuinely converted.

Beware: Teaching that contradict the NT emphasis on evidence of conversion... e.g. ‘Carnal Christian’

(b) The responsibility of Christian to use the *means of grace* to persevere

➤ Ecclesial: The church is the major means of grace in its institution and mandates

- Church membership is an imperative of NT discipleships... Eph 4:11f

➤ Personal: There are individual disciplines for spiritual cultivation

- The chief of these individual disciplines are Bible meditation and personal prayer... 1Pt 2:2; Mt 6:6

- They must be engaged in as a matter of discipline, not mood or feeling... Col 4:2

Point: We should not seek those ways that we think make Christian living livable, but those God-ordained means that draw us to Himself.

3. Problem: The Backslider and the Apostate

Backsliding: Used in the OT to speak of Israel's covenant unfaithfulness... Jer 2:19; 3:6 etc.

➤ A Christian who declines in his graces, or falls into grievous offenses... Gal 6:1; Ps 51

➤ Such a Christian will lack the joy of communication with God and profit from the means of grace

Usual ideology: Many tempted to conclude that David was not a true believer... c.f. Peter's denial of Christ; Rom 7:14ff

Point: Sometimes God allows people to sin so that they will eventually find the depravity of their sin and bring himself down in genuine humility before God.

➤ But he/she will not altogether give up on the Savior and the Word... Ps 51:12

➤ The only way back to communion is by repentance and renewal... Ps 51:17

[See also: 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, XVII.2]

Apostate: A professing Christian who overthrows his faith and departs from all means of grace... 1 Jn. 2:19; 2 Pt 2:20ff.

Note: Under testing in time, temporary faith does not endure like true saving faith... Mt 13:20

➤ Temporary believers may renounce the objective faith of gospel truth

➤ Or, they may depart from the practice of Christian living

Point: It's not that they were saved and then became unsaved; it's that they were never truly saved at all!... Heb 6:4-6

[Steele & Tomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 124.5] – “The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints does not maintain that all who *profess* the Christian faith are certain of heaven. It is *saints*—those who are set apart by the Spirit—who *persevere* to the end. It is *believers*—those who are given true, living faith in Christ—who are *secure* and safe in Him. Many who profess to believe fall away, but they do not fall from grace for they were never in grace. True believers do fall into temptations, and they do commit grievous sins, but these sins do not cause them to lose their salvation or separate them from Christ.”

Rectifying error: If we see a professing Christian committing a grievous sin, we shouldn't begin by questioning their salvation

➤ We should love and pray for them and then do what Jesus commanded in Matthew 18:15-16

➤ This is what the prophet Nathan did after King David committed both adultery and murder... 2 Sam 11

***Perseverance of the Saints is no license to sin;
it is a confidence and assurance,
as well as a call to a holy life!***

(Thomas Ascol)