

**Podcast: Confessing the Faith**

**Episode 13: Calvinism - The Perseverance of the Saints**

Participants: Mike Thezier, Joe Anady

Published: 2/11/2016

**Q1: What does the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints teach?**

1. LBC 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 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; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 John 2:19; Psalms 89:31, 32; 1 Corinthians 11:32; Malachi 3:6 )"
  - a. Perseverance Asserted:
    - i. Perseverance is rooted in the Pactum Salutis and Ordo Salutis. (this is true of almost all chapters - the leading principle is rooted in the history of salvation)
      1. Eternity: Election in Christ
      2. Effectual Calling
      3. Definitive Sanctification
      4. Belief in their own personal life history.
    - ii. Perseverance defined negatively:
      1. Cannot totally fall away.
        - a. Believers cannot sin away their salvation.
      2. Cannot finally fall away.
        - a. At the end of their lives they will not be found in a condition of falling away.
      3. Now notice, that the wording is "fall from the state of grace."
    - iii. Perseverance expressed positively
      1. "To the end" refers to the end of this life
    - iv. The reasons for perseverance:
      1. God's acts cannot be reversed
      2. Because he continues his work by producing many graces of the Spirit in them in this life.
    - v. The factors necessitating perseverance:
      1. The world
      2. The flesh (unbelief)
      3. The devil.
      4. All of these may individually or together impede "the sensible sight of the light and love of God."
    - vi. The facts of perseverance in the face of this threefold opposition:
      1. God is always the same - immutability "yet he is still the same..."
      2. His people are kept by his mighty power
      3. Their names are engraven on his hands
      4. Their names have been written in the book of life.
2. Contrary to Arminianism which teaches that a person can fall from grace.

3. This is *not* teaching that if a person says the sinner's prayer he or she is saved. We are not saved by saying the sinner's prayer. We are saved by faith in Christ. And true faith involves repentance. True faith produces fruit. True faith perseveres.

**Q2: Whose work is this? Our's or God's?**

1. We are to persevere, but it is God who preserves us. It is a grace. The same can be said of sanctification and faith.

**Q3: What objections do people raise against this doctrine?**

1. In my experience this is the least objected to of the five points.
2. The warning passages found in scripture.
  - a. "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end." (Hebrews 3:12–14, ESV)
  - b. "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away." (John 16:1, ESV)
3. Experience. There are some who seem to believe who fall away.
  - a. The scriptures tell us how to view this:
    - i. "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." (1 John 2:19, ESV)

**Q4: How would you present the doctrine of perseverance from the scriptures.**

1. Implicit
  - a. In light of the four points already covered (unconditional election, total depravity, limited atonement, effectual calling)
    - i. All doctrine hangs together. If you believe that salvation is based upon your decision from the beginning, it is no wonder you believe that that salvation can be abandoned by your decision.
    - ii. LBC 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 ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof. ( Romans 8:30; Romans 9:11, 16; Romans 5:9, 10; John 14:19; Hebrews 6:17, 18; 1 John 3:9; Jeremiah 32:40 )"
  - b. Book of life passages
  - c. Pactum Salutis
2. Explicit
  - a. "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." (Philippians 1:6, ESV)
  - b. "When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him." (John 17:1–2, ESV)
  - c. "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day." (John 6:39, ESV)
  - d. "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:28, ESV)
  - e. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:3–5, ESV)

- f. “ But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.” (2 Timothy 1:12, ESV)
- g. “To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 2:14, ESV)
- h. “In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will...” (Ephesians 1:11, ESV)
- i. “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” (2 Timothy 4:18, ESV)
- j. “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ...” (Jude 1, ESV)
- k. “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.” (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24, ESV)
- l. “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, 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.” (Jude 24–25, ESV)

**Q5: What about the objection that this doctrine leads to loose living?**

- 1. If a person objects in this way it reveals that he or she has not understood the doctrine of perseverance.
- 2. To object in this way is to underestimate the significance of regeneration and sanctification by the Spirit.
- 3. On the one hand we do not need to manipulate people with fear by teaching them a false doctrine (you can lose your salvation)
- 4. On the other hand we ought not give people a false sense of assurance by teaching them a false doctrine (sinner’s prayer guarantees that you are saved)

**Q6: What then are we to think about those who profess Christ who struggle with doubt, or some sin, or who seem to walk away from the faith for a time?**

- 1. When a person bears bad fruit it brings uncertainty to their hearts and to ours.
- 2. But we should not judge them finally as only God can.
- 3. LBC 17.3 “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. ( Matthew 26:70, 72, 74; Isaiah 64:5, 9; Ephesians 4:30; Psalms 51:10, 12; Psalms 32:3, 4; 2 Samuel 12:14; Luke 22:32, 61, 62 )”