



LIEUT-COLONEL GABRIEL ADEPOJU  
PROGRAMME SECRETARY  
NIGERIA TERRITORY

## CONTINUED OBEDIENT FAITH DOCTRINE FOR TODAY

SERIES: THE ARMY'S ELEVEN ARTICLES OF FAITH

### [Doctrine 9]

*We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.*

**IT** IS an encouragement to sincerely desire a serious commitment to the way of the cross – the symbol of man's salvation.

It is necessary here to put on record the meaning of salvation in the context of Christian experience. According to *Webster's Universal Dictionary and Thesaurus* (2010), salvation in Christianity is 'the act of saving someone from sin or evil: the state of being saved from sin or evil'. In ordinary terms, there are many things from which one could be saved, such as an accident or death. But it can also mean to be delivered from circumstances or situations: for instance, the Israelites' Exodus was salvation from captivity or oppression; the Jews' return from Babylonian exile was salvation; as was the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire in 1807.

Within the frame of this study, salvation refers to the deliverance from the power that holds a human being hostage or captive to sin. Even when we know what is right and wrong, the power to say 'no' to wrong that has previously been elusive, becomes ours when we are saved. In this instance, I define salvation as the presence of Jesus Christ in any life. When Jesus is present in a life, the power to say 'no' to wrong and say 'yes' to right is always there.

According to the ninth doctrine, no one can remain saved (though previously saved) without a

corresponding continuous obedient faith. Obedient faith – the very foundational faith that brought a soul into union with Christ through repentance and regeneration – must necessarily be a continuous experience. By this declaration, the Army has put the basis of our faith in the Wesleyan tradition. John Wesley was influenced by what is known as Arminianism. This teaching, associated with the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), is essentially rooted in the rejection of the concept of predestination taught by Calvin (Calvinism), whereas Arminianism went further to affirm the freedom of human will.

According to Arminianism, a human being has free will or the ability to choose. At the Fall, human nature was seriously affected and left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. As the sovereign God graciously enables every sinner to repent and to believe but does not interfere with a person's freedom, every sinner possesses a free will on which their eternal destiny depends. Man's freedom exists in his ability to choose good over evil, which means his will is not enslaved by his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with the Spirit of God and be regenerated or resist God's provision and perish.

Christ's redemption makes it possible for everyone to be saved but does not actually secure the salvation of

### FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

- \* LOOKING AT YOUR CHRISTIAN JOURNEY SO FAR, WHAT OBSTACLES HAVE PREVENTED YOU FROM LIVING IN A CONTINUOUS OBEDIENT FAITH?
- \* WHAT ARE THE LIFESTYLE IMPLICATIONS OF A CONTINUOUS OBEDIENT FAITH?
- \* WHAT STEPS DO YOU TAKE WHEN YOU REALISE THAT YOUR OBEDIENCE IS AT STAKE?

anyone. For faith is the condition to man's salvation. There is no controversy that Christ died for all and for every individual, but only those who believe in him are saved. His death enables God to pardon sinners on the condition that man believes. Christ's redemption becomes applicable only if man chooses to accept it. The Holy Spirit can be resisted.

Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to maintain their faith. This is the premise that influenced our doctrine that 'continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ'. The faith God's people should continually exercise is of the same nature as saving faith.

Another great thinker who had great influence on the Protestant Church during the Reformation of the 16th century was John Calvin. He strongly believed in predestination and election. He was of Augustine's tradition and thought that 'a believer's salvation is due solely to God's free choice (election) and depends on the action of this irresistible grace' (John Coutts, *This We Believe*, IHQ, 1990). This thinking led to the doctrine of the final 'perseverance of the saints', otherwise known as 'once saved, always saved'. Or in a more contemporary language, it is called 'eternal security'. According to David Stewart, 'If mankind has nothing to do with saving himself, then why would

God require men to do something to maintain it?' (*Eternal Security: You CANNOT Lose Your Salvation*, 2014).

Stewart failed in his analysis of the above quoted phrase. God appeals to our will/volition: 'Whoever...' (see e.g. Mark 8:34-38, 16:16; John 3:36, 6:35). This is not an imposition. It is a condition that allows us to choose. Yes, the necessary procedure for pardon has been obtained through the death of Jesus, but we must accept and believe this before we can be saved. If our salvation is based on the acceptance of the offer, the sustenance of the offer requires a corresponding cooperation from us. Jesus emphatically taught this in John 15:2. If someone who is truly saved does not bear (continuously) corresponding fruit, such would be plucked out of the vine. Verse 6 talks of the obstinate person who refuses to remain and will inevitably be eternally lost.

Neither was John Calvin right in his postulation. If God had predestined some for eternity, he would not be justified to send or subject the erring ones (whom he destined so) to any punishment since, in the first instance, he was responsible for their action. And if he does, it would be a contradiction to his very nature and person. *God did not choose to save anyone against his/her will*. The plan of action for man's justification is provided by God, yet man must be ready to accept it.

Our filiation in the family of God is that of adoption, that is his plan for mankind. Therefore, to sustain that Father-child relationship between God and us, this continued obedient faith must necessarily be observed. God is faithful and thus he requires a certain level of faithfulness from his grafted children. Anything short of this may neither be sufficient to face the tide of time nor the demand of Scripture.

If 'once saved, always saved', why would Jesus tell his disciples to 'watch and pray'?

When someone becomes saved, the sinful nature has decisively been dealt with at the conversion. However, before long, sin will again begin to attempt resurfacing in our life and if it's not dealt with, through continued obedient faith, we may find ourselves in a state worse than before conversion.

*Continued obedient faith entails diligently studying the Word of God, living it both in attitude and lifestyle, manifesting in prayer an utter dependence on God, and not relying on the provision of political authorities or social settings.*