

**THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS****DEFINITION:**

“Perseverance of the Saints” is the terminology used in theology to refer to the fact that once someone is saved he cannot lose his salvation. Some have argued, and rightfully so, that it would have been better to call it “The Preservation of the Saints,” for “perseverance” stresses our endurance while “preservation” stresses God’s activity in keeping us. The only reason that we persevere is because God preserves us.

**BIBLICAL EVIDENCE**

Sam Storms does a wonderful job in helping us understand the necessity of eternal security by considering its implications in relation to the triune God. The following is either a slight rewording or direct quotation of his observations<sup>1</sup> unless otherwise noted.

**WHAT IT WOULD MEAN IN RELATION TO GOD THE FATHER IF A TRUE BELIEVER COULD LOSE HIS/HER SALVATION?*****1. It would mean that God would not be worthy of glory nor of our adoring praise and worship*****Jude 24-25**

**24 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, 25 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.**

In Jude 24 and 25 it says that “God is able to keep you from stumbling (cf. Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:20). Left to ourselves, we would stumble so as to fall finally and forever. But the issue at stake isn't whether you are able to persevere but whether God is able to preserve and keep you. Here we see that whereas we might be inclined to choose a sinful course of action that would ultimately lead to our stumbling, God is able to intervene and override our rebellious determination and to cause us to stand blameless before him with great joy (cf. 1 Pt. 1:19).

It is because God is able to do this that he is worthy of "glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time, now and forever." Our security is not dependent on our ability, but on God's." (Sam Storms)

**Romans 5:6-11; 8:32**

“If there were ever a time when God might forever turn his back on you it was when you were an alien, an orphan, an enemy, hostile and outside the kingdom. But if he loved you then, how much more so now that you are an ally, a child, a friend and a citizen of the kingdom and family of God. If God took the greatest step necessary to save you when you were his worst enemy, will he not take whatever lesser steps are necessary to keep you saved now that you are his child?” (Sam Storms)

## 2. *It would mean that God's purpose in redemption would fail and unravel*

Romans 8:28-30; Phil. 1:6

### Romans 8:28-30

**28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 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; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.**

Romans 8:28-39 focuses on two arguments that show that we are secure in our salvation.

(1) We are secure because the process of salvation which involves our glorification is pre-ordained by God (8:29-30).

(2) We are secure because our lives rest in the love of God (8:31-39).

Believers are called to salvation in accordance to the settled plan and purpose of God. Those who God calls are previously predestined. In connection with verse 28, the idea is this: all things work together for good because all things are moving in the direction of our future glorification. All that God has foreknown will come to pass.

In the middle of verse 29 we see that the purpose behind each person's salvation is so that Christ "might be the first born among many brethren." "First born" doesn't just mean first in order to be born, but refers to priority, supremacy, one who has a prominent position, or is the head (cf. Col. 1:15, 18; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 1:5). Jesus is head over the countless multitudes who have been made sons of God through Him. We are not just predestined for our happiness, but through our glorification the preeminence of Christ will be displayed to all creation for all eternity. "God did not call us without a specific aim or purpose in mind. He had a 'destiny' in mind for us and He called us according to [that] purpose" (Piper, Future Grace, 126).

In these verses we see an unbroken chain linking the person foreknown by God **to his destiny of his glorification**. When God selected which men He would save, we call it foreknowledge. When God determines that those whom He selected will come to Him (Acts 4:28; Eph. 1:5, 11), we call it predestination. When we see that God causes those who are selected to arrive at their appointed end (conformity to the image of His Son) we see that predestination extends to the glorification of all whom He foreknew.

"The objects of calling are numerically identical with the objects of predestination ("**those whom He predestined, He called**"), and so on. Those who are, as it were, as good as glorified (note the past tense) are those who, in eternity past, were foreknown. Not one has been lost in the process." (Sam Storms)

This is another way of saying, as Paul does, that "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6). God, who began the good work, will bring it to completion. "Completion" rests on God's shoulders, not man. (PT)

### 3. *It would mean that God's will would be frustrated and fail of fulfillment*

#### John 6:38-40

As Storms points out,

"The argument of Jesus in these verses must be carefully noted:

On several occasions in John's Gospel divine election is described in terms of God the Father giving certain persons to God the Son (6:37, 39; 10:29; 17:1-2, 6, 9, 24). In each of these cases the giving of men to Christ precedes and is the cause of their receiving eternal life. Those who are given to the Son include not only the present company of disciples who believe in Jesus but also the elect of future ages who will come to faith through the gospel. Jesus looks upon them as already his (John 17:20-21; see also John 10:16; Acts 18:10), even though they have not yet believed in his name. They are his because they were given to him by the Father in eternity past.

What is of special importance to us is what Jesus says about how those whom the Father has given to him come to him and whether or not those who come can ever lose their salvation. It will prove helpful to look at this in terms of three impossibilities.

(1) The first impossibility. Jesus says that it is morally and spiritually impossible for a person to come to Christ apart from the "drawing" of that person by God the Father (6:44,65). May I strongly emphasize the words morally and spiritually. The reason people do not come to Christ is not because they lack a will, or a mind, or feelings, or even lack opportunity and occasion. Their not coming to Christ is due to their moral and spiritual refusal to do so, a refusal in which they willingly and freely delight. If they cannot come it is not because God will not let them. It is because it is their nature not to want to come. In sum, their not coming is not because of a physical defect but because of a moral refusal.

(2) The second impossibility. Jesus also says that it is impossible for someone whom the Father "draws" not to come to him. He says in verse 37, "**All** that the Father gives Me **shall come to Me**" In other words, just as it is impossible for a person to come to Christ apart from the Father drawing him/her, so also is it impossible for a person not to come to Christ if the Father does draw him/her. Two crucial elements are involved here. On the one hand, if a man is to be saved he must come to Christ. An active, willing embrace of Jesus Christ in faith is essential. On the other hand, this active, willing embrace of Jesus Christ is guaranteed by virtue of the Father having given certain people to Jesus Christ. John Murray explains it this way:

"Jesus does not say: all that the Father gives me **are brought** to me. He uses the term that denotes motion on the part of the person - '**will come** to me.' Coming to Christ is the movement of commitment to Christ, coming that engages the whole-souled activity of the person coming. It is not that he may come, not that he has the opportunity to come, not that he will in all probability come, and not simply that he is empowered to come, but that he will come. There is absolute certainty; There is a divine necessity; the order of heaven insures the sequence" (59).

Therefore, it is impossible that an elect person, a "given-by-the-Father-to-the-Son" person, might fail to come to faith in Christ. Or to put it positively, all the elect shall come to faith in Christ. God's drawing of them is efficacious. The Father will never fail in drawing to salvation those whom he has given to the Son.

(3) The third impossibility. To the previous two impossibilities Jesus adds a third. He has already said it is impossible to come to him unless the Father draws. He has also said it is impossible not to come if the Father

does draw. Now he says that when a man does come through the drawing of the Father it is impossible for him to be cast out. Look again at verse 37: "and the one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out." The point is that those whom the Father gives to the Son, who therefore come to the Son, will be received by the Son and shall never perish.

The verb translated "cast out" in verse 37 is used several times in John (2:15; 6:37; 9:34f.; 10:4; 12:31) and always means to cast out someone or something already in. Thus the emphasis here is not so much on receiving the one who comes (although that is true enough in itself) but on preserving him. In other words, "6:37 argues not only that the ones given to Jesus will inevitably come to him, but that Jesus will keep them individually . . . once there" (D. A. Carson, 184).

Who would suggest that Jesus Christ would refuse to accept what his Father has given him? If the Father was pleased to make a gift of certain sinners to his most blessed Son, you may rest assured that the Son will neither despise nor deny his Father's gracious generosity. The certainty of ultimate and absolute salvation for those who come to the Son is reaffirmed in verses 38-40. Their life 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, a will or purpose that shall ultimately be (Ps. 115:3; 135:6; Dan. 4:34-35; Eph. 1:11; Acts 4:28). What did Jesus come to do? He came to do the Father's will (v.38). What is the Father's will? The Father's will is that all those he has given to the Son be fully and finally saved (v. 39)." (Sam Storms)

#### **4. It would mean that the Father has refused to answer the prayers of His Son**

**John 17:11,15**

#### **5. It would mean that God, supposedly all-powerful, would be exposed as impotent and helpless**

**John 10:28-29; Rom. 8:35-39; 2 Tim 1:12**

"Jesus grounds his confidence in the safety of his sheep in the incomparable omnipotence of his Father. It is because there is no one greater or more powerful than God the Father that the sheep are secure. Was Jesus mistaken in his assessment of the Father's power and purpose?"

Several observations regarding John 10 are in order:

- a) "And they shall never perish" - Lit., they shall not, by no means ever, perish. This is an absolute, unequivocal, unassailable negative. Would Jesus have said this if in fact many of his sheep shall perish? If so much as one true child of God can ever perish, Jesus has deceived us.
- b) "And no one shall snatch them out of my hand" - Not the attacking wolf (v. 12), nor the thieves and robbers (vv. 1, 8), nor anyone. "No one means no one."
- c) "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" - God the Father himself stands behind God the Son in keeping the sheep in the fold. Jesus holds us tightly. God holds us tightly. Who can steal from God? Who has the strength or the cunning or the power to outwit and outmuscle Almighty God?
- d) In v. 28 Jesus says "no one will snatch them" whereas in v. 29 he says "no one can snatch them." 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.

e) "O.K., perhaps no one else can snatch me from God's hand. But what if I myself wriggle free and jump out of my own accord?" Is your power of choice greater than God's? Is your will more powerful than his? Look again at Jesus' words: "No one" means "**ALL**" . . . me, others, you!

Those who do not believe in eternal security believe that Jesus is saying: "No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand; oh, that is, except for every one of the sheep!" But if Jesus meant that everyone can depart why say "no one can"?

If Jesus wanted to teach eternal security, how could he have done it better or more explicitly than the way he does it here? If you wanted to assert eternal security, how could you do it better than by using the words of Jesus in John 10?" (Sam Storms)

### ***1 Timothy 4:18***

"Rescue" is the normal word meaning "to save." Paul is confident that the Lord will save us from evil until we will be brought into the kingdom.

### ***1 Peter 1:3-5***

Our inheritance will never perish – spoil or fade – it is shielded by the power of God through faith.

**6. It would mean that God, supposedly righteous, would be exposed as a liar and an impostor**

**Hebrews 13:5-6 (cf. with 6:17-19)**

**7. It would mean that God would prove to be faithless**

**1 Cor. 1:7-9; 10:13; 1 Thess. 3:2-4; 5:23-24**

Though the church had many faults, they were promised to be kept by God until the end. Their ability is not based on their own strength but the faithfulness of God.

### ***WHAT IT WOULD MEAN IN RELATION TO GOD THE SON IF A TRUE BELIEVER COULD LOSE HIS/HER SALVATION?***

**1. It would mean that Christ will have failed in the purpose for which He died**

**John 6:37-40; 10:14-18,27-30**

**2. It would mean that Christ will have failed in the purpose for which He was raised**

**Romans 4:24-25**

**3. It would mean that Christ will have failed in the purpose for which He now intercedes in the presence of the Father**

**Rom. 8:31-34; 1 John 2:1-2; Heb. 7:25**

Christ is able to save us in totality. . . . because He intercedes on our behalf. It is inconceivable that Christ's prayers would not be answered.

**4. It would mean that Christ will fail to accomplish the goal for which He is to return to this earth**

John 6:40b

**5. It would mean that Christ will prove to have been a liar**

John 5:24; John 6:37; 10:27-28

In John 5:24 Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

"Crossed over" is a perfect tense verb - a past action with continuing results. Jesus says, that believers have passed out of death into life at a point of time in the past and continue on in that state; the result is irrevocable. (TK)

**WHAT IT WOULD MEAN IN RELATION TO THE HOLY SPIRIT IF A TRUE BELIEVER COULD LOSE HIS/HER SALVATION?****1. It would mean that the Holy Spirit will have failed in his work of sealing.**

2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30

The literal use of the term "seal" was of a stamped impression in wax pointing to ownership and protection. "As Eph. 1:13 and 4:30 make certain, the 'seal' is the Spirit, by whom God has marked believers and claimed them for his own" (Fee, God's Empowering Presence, 807).

**2. It would mean that the Holy Spirit will have failed in his ministry as a pledge of the future consummation of our redemption**

2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5

"God the Holy Spirit will have broken and violated a promise, having declared that he is a downpayment in pledge of the complete and consummate gift yet to come. But if the complete and consummate gift does not come, he will have reneged on his word. Gundry-Volf offers this explanation:

"The Spirit given to believers . . . functions as a divine promise and guarantee that the redemptive process will be completed. Final salvation is as certain to follow the gift of the Spirit as full payment must by law succeed the deposit for a purchase. Paul drives home the message of God's faithfulness in the work of salvation by using the familiar language of legally binding business transactions which alludes to the practice of the handing over of an *arrabon* (ἀρραβών = pledge or guarantee) with its ensuing financial obligations. Believers have in the indwelling Spirit, then, a sign that God is committed to their full redemption. This outcome is entirely dependent on God's faithfulness, as the metaphor implies" (30).

Gordon Fee agrees, pointing out that the term (*arrabon*) was used in commercial transactions to refer to the first installment of the total amount due. The down payment effectively guaranteed the fulfillment of whatever contractual obligations were assumed. "The Spirit, therefore," says Fee, "serves as God's down

payment in our present lives, the certain evidence that the future has come into the present, the sure guarantee that the future will be realized in full measure" (807). (Sam Storms)

### **3. *It would mean that the Spirit will have failed in his ministry as firstfruits***

#### **Romans 8:23**

"This metaphor is also used of Christ's resurrection as the guarantee of ours (1 Cor. 15:20,23). Similar to the idea behind down payment, the Holy Spirit as "the first sheaf is God's pledge to us of the final harvest. Thus . . . the Spirit plays the essential role in our present existence, as both evidence and guarantee that the future is now and yet to be" (Fee, 807).

#### **CONCLUSION:**

"The basis for our security in salvation is not ultimately our righteousness or obedience but God's promise, God's power, God's purpose, and most of all God's passionate love for us in Christ. God is committed to preserving us in faith, for if we were to stumble so as to fully and finally fall away, God stands more to lose than we do.

Finally, is there anyone among you who truly thinks their salvation hangs suspended on the thin thread of your own will-power and commitment to righteousness? I know my own soul all too well. Were it not for God's preserving grace I would have lost my salvation the day after I was born again.

If you do not believe in the security of your soul in Christ, tomorrow should hold little but fear and misery and perhaps despair for you. For it may well be the day you commit that sin that will forever sever you from the Savior's love. I can face tomorrow and the day after and the day after that with confidence, because I know that He "will never leave me nor forsake me" (Heb. 13:5). (Sam Storms)

For the original document by Sam Storms see

<http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/a-defense-of-the-perseverance-of-the-saints-part-i/>

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