

Perseverance

- The issue
 - How can a Christian believer be sure that, having been saved, they will not fall away from the Lord?
 - Since we do not become perfect upon salvation, how can we be sure that we will pass from this life into heaven?
 - Is there the possibility that the sinner who savingly trusts in the Person and finished work of Christ for eternal life might fail to reach eternal life?
 - Can the sinner who laid hold of Christ by faith to go to heaven end up in hell?
 - Will the forgiveness once granted to the saved individual be revoked, sending them into a state of irreparable condemnation?
 - Since regeneration does not impart perfection, but the Christian continues to sin at times, how can there be assurance of perseverance in the faith?
 - The grace of perseverance answers these questions.
- Definition:
 - Perseverance refers to the fact that the true believer will not fall away from his relationship with God, but rather will endure until the end and go to heaven. All who are elect will end up in heaven.
- Scripture:

Jesus will not lose even one of the Father's elect

John 6:39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."

The golden-chain of salvation: those predestined are as good as glorified

Romans 8:29–30 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.

God finishes what he begins

Philippians 1:6 *For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

Those who appear not to persevere were never regenerate

1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

*Therefore, there is no such thing as someone who once was a Christian but is no longer.

- Timing
 - When does perseverance occur in the believer's life?
 - Perseverance is the grace of God consequent of regeneration. As it describes the process of endurance in the faith, it is a reality which begins at regeneration and continues, like sanctification, until death/glorification.
- Described
 - The reason that the regenerate person will persevere is because the sovereign power of God keeps them (1 Pet. 1:5). Though we must strive forward in godliness, it is not our will and power that ultimately ensures our perseverance to heaven.
 - God uses the believer's effort in sanctification as a means to persevere. In other words, exertion towards sanctification accompanies our

perseverance in the Christian faith.

Romans 11:22 Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

1 Timothy 4:16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

Jesus teaches in the parable of the soils that only those who persevere and bear fruit are truly saved:

Matthew 13:19–23 “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. ²⁰ The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. ²² And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²³ And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

- Therefore, there is a bit of tension when it comes to perseverance and the believer's exertion to submit to the word of God. Those who live in perpetual sin outside of submission to God's word demonstrate that they are not likely regenerate, and thus, will not persevere.
- A truly saving faith will also be a finishing faith.

Hebrews 12:14 Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

- God uses our striving in holiness to accomplish our perseverance.
- Murray: “The perseverance of the saints reminds us very forcibly that only those who persevere to the end are truly saints. We do not attain to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus automatically.

Perseverance means the engagement of our persons in the most intense and concentrated devotion to those means which God has ordained for the achievement of his saving purpose. The scriptural doctrine of perseverance has no affinity with the quietism and antinomianism which are so prevalent in evangelical circles.”¹

- The certainty of the believer’s perseverance is not ultimately grounded in the strength, moral exertion, or performance of the believer.
- The certainty of the believer’s perseverance is grounded in the preserving nature of the triune God (cf. Eph 1:3-14).²
 - First, our perseverance is founded in the unchanging love, infinite power, and saving will of **God the Father**. His saving love for the believer was decreed in eternity past (John 6:37, 39; 10:29; 17:2; Eph 1:4-6; 2 Tim 1:9). God the Father will not fail to carry out the fullness of his electing purpose to its decreed end (cf. Rom 8:31-34).
 - Second, the believer’s security is grounded in the merits of **God the Son**; Christ’s saving work and the efficacy of his present intercession. “What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us” (Rom 8:31-34).

Christ’s death, resurrection, and present intercession constitute the basis on which no charge against his people will ever stand. His death accomplished its intended goal; propitiation of the wrath of God (Rom 3:25, 1 John 4:10). His resurrection serves as the Father’s certification that His Son’s death sufficiently atoned for sin.

Spurgeon: “Where is the efficacy of the precious blood, if it does not effectually redeem? If it only redeemeth for a time and then suffereth us to perish, where is its value?”³

¹ John Murray, p. 165.

² *Biblical Doctrine*, 644-646.

³ Charles Spurgeon, “Enduring to the End,” *Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia*, 12:298-99.

Furthermore, Christ's intercessory work serves as the security for believers. "Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25).

Therefore, believers are kept secure, despite ongoing imperfection, on the basis of the Person and finished work of Christ.

- Third, the believer's security in salvation is founded on the work of **God the Spirit**. The work of the Holy Spirit is an additional basis for the perseverance of the believer. "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:13-14). Believers are permanently sealed by the saving work of the Spirit. The word "pledge" (v. 14) has the idea of an "earnest" or down payment which guarantees remaining payment. Having sealed himself to believers and indwelt them as a pledge, God will not thereafter fail to bring his people to final salvation.

Therefore, the believer's ultimate hope for perseverance in the faith lies in the greatness and grace of the triune God; Father, Son, and Spirit.

- Recommended resources
 - *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, John Murray, (Eerdmans, 2015), Chapter 8: Perseverance.
 - *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Biblical Truth*, eds. John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, pp. 644-649, (Crossway, 2017).
 - *The Cross and Salvation*, Bruce Demarest, (Crossway, 1997), Chapter 11: The Doctrine of Preservation and Perseverance.