



Reformed Theology

Perseverance of the Saints

Introduction

Matthew 24:13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

“Perseverance is the sign of being born again. Born again people persevere. No one loses his salvation.”
(John Piper)

Romans 8:30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

You have an inheritance “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading” that God is keeping for you. And God is keeping *you* for it. (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I Peter 1:3–5 [3] 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, [4] to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, [5] who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

“If we have it, we never lose it. If we lose it, we never had it.” (Sproul)

The doctrine of perseverance has to do with the permanency of our salvation. (Sproul)

The Reformed faith believes that we can have assurance not only of our present state of salvation, but also of our continuity in that state. This assurance for the future rests in the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. (Sproul)

It follows from what we saw in the last section that the people of God will persevere to the end and not be lost. The foreknown are predestined, the predestined are called, the called are justified, and the justified are glorified (Romans 8:30). No one is lost from this group. To belong to this people is to be eternally secure. But we mean more than this by the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. We mean that the saints will and must persevere in faith and the obedience which comes from faith. (Piper)

Calvinism – God works infallibly to preserve in faith all who are truly born again, so that none is ever lost.

Arminianism – God works to preserve His people, but does not always prevent some, who were born again, from falling away to destruction.

Since God chose his people before the foundation of the world, and since Jesus has paid their ransom, and since the Holy Spirit has called them and made them holy, it stands to reason that “he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). (Orrick)

Philippians 1:6 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.

All those whom God has chosen to save will surely reach glorification; nobody falls through the cracks of God's hand and loses their salvation (Romans 8:30). (Simple Theology)

Romans 8:30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Psalms 37:28 For the LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.

John 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

Jonah 2:9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!"

Elder's Affirmation of faith

10.5 We believe that the sanctification, which comes by the Spirit through faith, does not reach perfection or completion in this life. Although slavery to sin is broken, and sinful desires and progressively weakened by the power of a superior satisfaction in the glory of Christ, yet there remain remnants of corruption in every heart that give rise to irreconcilable war and, call for vigilance in the lifelong fight of faith.

10.6 We believe that all who are justified will win this fight. They will persevere in faith and never surrender to the enemy of their souls. The perseverance in the promise of the New Covenant, obtained by the blood of Christ, and worked in us by God Himself, yet not so as to diminish, but only to empower and encourage, our vigilance; so that, we may say in the end, I have fought the good fight, but it is not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Points

Our faith must endure to the end if we are to be saved.

Eternal security:

is not: "You're secure no matter what you do."

Is: "You're secure because He keeps you. You won't make shipwreck of your faith."

Persevering in faith does not mean that the saints do not go through seasons of doubt and spiritual darkness and measures of unbelief in the promises and the goodness of God. (Piper)

What we mean when we say that faith must persevere to the end is that we must never come to a point of renouncing Christ with such hardness of heart that we can never return, but instead only prove ourselves to have been hypocrites in our professed faith. (Piper)

So when we speak of the necessity (and certainty) of perseverance we do not mean perfection. And we do not mean that there are no struggles or serious measures of unbelief. (Piper)

Obedience, evidencing inner renewal from God, is necessary for final salvation.

The perseverance of the saints is not the guarantee of perfection, but rather that God will keep us fighting the fight of faith so that we hate our sin and never make any lasting peace with it. (Piper)

Enduring is a necessity

Colossians 1:21–23 [21] And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, [22] he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, [23] if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

I Corinthians 15:1–2 [1] Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, [2] and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

Matthew 13:20–22 [20] As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, [21] yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. [22] As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Revelation 2:10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Mark 13:13 And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Not perfection

Philippians 3:13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But moral change

Hebrews 12:14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Galatians 5:19–21 [19] Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, [21] envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

I John 2:3–6 [3] And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. [4] Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, [5] but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: [6] whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

John 8:31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,

God's elect cannot be lost.

This is why we believe in eternal security – namely, the eternal security of the elect. The implication is that God will so work in us that those whom he has chosen for eternal salvation will be enabled by him to persevere in faith to the end and fulfill, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the requirements for a new kind of life. (Piper)

Romans 8:30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Philippians 1:6 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.

John 10:27-30 [27] My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. [28] I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. [29] 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. [30] I and the Father are one.”

Jeremiah 32:40 I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

Jude 24-25 [24] 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, [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.

I Thessalonians 5:23-24 [23] 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. [24] He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

There is a falling away of some, but if it persists, it shows that their faith was not genuine and they were not born of God.

But what about the person who publicly embraced Christ but has since turned away? Nearly all of us can think of at least one person who seemed to embrace Christianity for a season but since has walked away.

To that person one of two things are the case:

1. That individual will repent from their sin and return to Christ, or...
2. That person never knew Christ at all.

I John 2:19 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.

Luke 8:9–14 [9] And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, [10] he said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’ [11] Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. [12] The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. [13] And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. [14] And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

Hebrews 3:13–14 [13] 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. [14] For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

God justifies us completely through faith, and this faith perseveres and bears fruit (“obedience of faith”).

The role of obedience in our justification is to give evidence that our faith is authentic. Deeds of love are not the ground of our first or final acceptance with God. Their function is to validate, and make public, the sovereign work of God giving us new birth and creating the new heart of faith. (Piper)

II Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Romans 5:19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Matthew 7:17–20 [17] So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. [18] A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. [19] Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. [20] Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

God works to cause His elect to persevere.

We are not left to ourselves in the fight of faith, and our assurance is rooted in the sovereign love of God to perform what he has called us to do. (Piper)

Jesus purchased for us all the promises of God when he shed his blood.

Luke 22:20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

II Corinthians 1:20 For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

Jeremiah 32:40 I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

Hebrews 13:20–21 [20] Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, [21] equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Philippians 2:12–13 [12] Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, [13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

We should be “diligent” to “confirm” our calling.

II Peter 1:10–11 [10] Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. [11] For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

Philippians 2:12–13 [12] Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, [13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Perseverance is a community project.

Hebrews 3:12–13 [12] Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. [13] 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.

Summary Statements

Why will I remain a Christian?

“He Will Hold Me Fast”

*When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will
hold me fast;
When the tempter would prevail, He will
hold me fast.
I could never keep my hold through life's
fearful path;
For my love is often cold; He must hold
me fast.*

*He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast;
For my Saviour loves me so, He will hold
me fast.*

*Those He saves are His delight, Christ
will hold me fast;
Precious in his holy sight, He will hold me
fast.
He'll not let my soul be lost; His promises
shall last;
Bought by Him at such a cost, He will
hold me fast.*

As part of the process of our sanctification, perseverance is a synergistic work. This means it is a cooperative effort between God and us. We persevere as he preserves. An analogy of this is often used with children. A child and his father walk down a dangerous path while holding hands. There are two ways in which they can hold hands. First, the child can grasp his father's hand and hold on tightly. If he lets go, he may fall. Second, the father can hold the child's hand. Only if the father loosens his grip can the child fall. In the first instance the child's safety depends on the consistency and firmness by which he clings to his father. In the second instance the child's safety depends on the consistency and firmness by which the father clings to him. (Sproul)

II Peter 1:3–4 [3] His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, [4] by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Romans 8:31–39 [31] What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? [33] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. [35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” [37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jude 24-25 [24] 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, [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.

We believe that all who are justified will win the fight of faith. They will persevere in faith and will not surrender finally to the enemy of their souls. This perseverance is the promise of the new covenant, obtained by the blood of Christ, and worked in us by God himself, yet not so as to diminish, but only to empower and encourage, our vigilance; so that we may say in the end, *I have fought the good fight, but it was not I, but the grace of God which was with me (II Timothy 4:7 I Corinthians 15:10)* .