

Here We Stand: Perseverance of the Saints

INTRODUCTION

- 500 years ago on this very day, the Reformation began!
- The gospel recovered amidst the historical and theological background of Roman Catholicism.
- The 5 Sola's served as stakes in the ground marking the great boundaries and distinctions that have, and continue to this day, to separate Protestantism from Roman Catholicism.
- The doctrines of grace...1st 4 points reviewed
- The Arminian's 5th point of contention with the Reformed position on grace was that they said, *"It ultimately rests with the believers to keep themselves in a state of grace by keeping up their faith; those who fail here fall away and are lost."*
- The Reformers response was "The Perseverance of the Saints". The saints will persevere in faith, because God will persevere in grace to save them.
- Sometimes referred to as the "Preservation of the Saints"

Scriptural Passages

- John 6 v.37 -40, *"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 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. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*
- The ultimate reason why the saints will persevere until the end and be raised with Jesus is the doctrine of election!

"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, the abiding of the Spirit, and the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which arises also the certainty and infallibility thereof."

Westminster Confession Faith Ch.17 Section 2

- John 10:28-30, *"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 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. I and the Father are one."*
- 5 things Jesus says to assure His sheep that they can never be lost!
- The reason the sheep will most certainly persevere until the end, is because the Father and the Son are one in their purpose to give eternal life to the sheep/the elect!
- Romans 8:29-30, *"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."*
- There is no break in the chain. None are lost in the process. Nothing can separate the elect from the love of God in Christ Jesus! Nothing and no one can separate us from God's love.
- God's grace preserves His elect "through" their perseverance in the faith. The perseverance of the saints not only stresses that God will preserve His elect by grace, but it simultaneously teaches that the elect must persevere until the end to be saved. This doctrine teaches that the saints will and must persevere in the obedience which comes from faith.
- One significant challenge before us in the doctrines of grace and in the Perseverance of the Saints particularly, is understanding the relationship between Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility!
- We must teach that God is sovereign in salvation and we must also teach that man is a responsible moral agent who is accountable to God. Both are true and both must be taught!
- Mark 13:13, *"But he who endures to the end will be saved."*
- Colossians 1:21, *"And you, who were once alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 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, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel..."*

- 2 Timothy 2:11, *"The saying is trustworthy, for: if we have died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him."*
- Hebrews 12:14, *"Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."*
- Our salvation is eternally secure on the one hand yet on the other hand we must persevere in the obedience of the faith if we are to be saved.

Traditional Objections

- Objection #1 Isn't Judas Iscariot the clearest example of someone who was truly saved and then lost his salvation?
- The life of Judas Iscariot does not teach us that a person who is genuinely saved can then be eternally lost. What his life does teach us is that it is possible to have a profession of faith but not the possession of faith!
- Backsliding is real.
- Luther's 1st Thesis 1 grants one very clear evidence of saving faith. Repentance!
- Objection #2 What about all the warning passages in the bible such as Hebrews 6 and 10? Don't warning passages like these clearly communicate that a person who is truly saved can then be lost?
- The warning passages, which are many, are given as "a" means to keep the saints persevering.
- Objection #3 Won't the doctrine of eternal security promote lawless living? Won't such a teaching result in careless, sinful living?
- Yes, for the false professor of faith! But never for the saint!
- God's grace in eternal security is a major stimulus for sanctification.
- The Christian life is warfare!
- Thank God that He finishes what He starts!

Addendum

- Westminster Confession of Faith: Of the Perseverance of the Saints
Chapter 17 Section One

“They, whom God has accepted in the Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.”

- Canons of Dort

http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html?mainframe=http://www.reformed.org/documents/canons_of_dordt.html

- Sovereign Grace Churches Statement of Faith

<http://sovereigngrace.com/statement-of-faith>