

BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED – PERSEVERANCE (I)!

How do I know that I shall continue as a Christian throughout my life? Is there anything that will keep me from falling away from Christ, anything to guarantee that I will remain a Christian until I die and be in heaven with God? Is it possible that I might turn away from Christ one day and lose the blessings of my salvation? In a word, can Christians lose their salvation?

Let's hear what our spiritual forefathers believe, as outlined in the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith:

Those whom God hath accepted in the beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, and given the precious faith of His elect unto, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

This answer has come to be known as *The Perseverance of the Saints*. We want to note a few things about their answer.

1. NOTE THE EMPHASIS OF THEIR ANSWER.

The emphasis is very much on God, on what He has done.

- *Accepted in the beloved* -- it is God who accepts.
- *Effectually called* -- it is God who calls a sinner out of darkness.
- *Sanctified by the Spirit* -- It is clear who is doing the sanctifying: the Spirit of God.
- *Given the precious faith of God's elect* -- it is God who gives faith.

This is very much the emphasis of Scripture itself. Speaking of salvation, the apostle Paul says in **Romans 9:16**, "*So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.*" Salvation begins with God. The prominent feature in man's salvation from sin is never *the free will of man* but *the free grace of God*.

Salvation not only begins with God, it will also continue with God.

The apostle Paul says in **Philippians 1:6**, "*Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" Since God never forsakes His work, therefore the believer will

continue in the state of belief until the end. Christians persevere because God perseveres with them!

2. **NOTE THE USE OF THE WORD "PERSEVERE".**

The word "*persevere*" means not to give up, but instead to continue to do something in spite of great difficulty and opposition. This is very much in line with the words of our Lord Jesus in **John 8:31-32** ~ *Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed in Him, "If you abide (continue) in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*

The apostle Paul said in **Colossians 1:23** ~ *If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel ...* The Christian Life is one of continuance. You have believed in Jesus Christ and you continue to believe in Him even today. You have believed and obeyed the Word of God, and you continue to do so even today. And you continue to do so despite of tremendous difficulties and violent oppositions. Therefore, though the emphasis is on God and what He has done and is doing, our responsibility as Christians are not diminished. We have to persevere, we have to continue, we have to struggle on and not give up.

3. **WE NOTE THE USE OF THE WORD "SAINTS".**

It is only saints who persevere. We are not talking about the perseverance of all professing Christians. For one can profess to have faith and yet not possess faith at all. We are not talking about the perseverance of those who appear to be Christians or even those who are members of a local church. We are talking specifically about the *perseverance of saints*, people who have truly believed in Jesus and are manifesting their faith in Christ by a relentless pursuit after holiness, likeness to Christ.

*The work which His goodness began,
The arm of His strength will complete;
His promise is Yea and Amen,
And never was forfeited yet.*