

P. Perseverance of the Saints

Perseverance of the Saints

God preserves the elect so they persevere to the end, so no chosen person will ever be lost. Since God has decreed the elect, and they cannot resist grace, they are unconditionally and eternally secure in that election.¹

Final Perseverance (aka Perseverance of the Saints)

Everyone regenerated by God's grace will persevere and be finally saved. No one who truly begins the life of faith will ever fall away and perish.²

Perseverance of the Saints

Those who are born of God will persevere to the end. God's salvation is guaranteed to the end. The Calvinist rejects the doctrine that one can be saved, then fall away from grace, or lose his salvation³

The Perseverance of the Saints is the next logical step in TULIP. It is the idea that if God in His Sovereignty has elected some for salvation, then He would not let them fall from grace.

This person does not hold to Calvinism - but he makes some good points

This doctrine asserts that the "saints" (those individuals who God has chosen to save before the foundation of the world) WILL continue in faith until the end. Those who apparently fall away either never had true faith to begin with or will return. This results in that 1) It's impossible for an individual to at any time know if he is truly saved and "eternally secure" because if he falls away in the latter part of his life this shows "he was never saved to begin with". 2) Individuals can safely place the responsibility to avoid sinning on GOD since HE is the one who are to "preserve" those he has chosen to save. 3) Christians might easier fall for temptations because they know they will be preserved to the end anyway, if they are among the elect (which all calvinists believe they are). 4) It can bring a false sense of security and that you can be saved in your sins.⁴

- Those who fall away were never believers to begin with - this is one comment that you will read over and over in Calvinistic teaching. It is a way to acknowledge the reality of people actually falling away, while still believing that the "Elect" will not.
- What about assurance of salvation? How can a Calvinist ever be assured of his salvation, or be certain he is one of the elect. The only way to know for sure is if you persevere to the end. So while you may be walking with the Lord today, who knows that if next year you will turn from him and all your friends may say, "he went out from us because he was not one of us." [1 John 2:19]. The only true assurance you can have as a Calvinist is to wait til the end of your life.
- Am I accountable for my sin? A person who believes in Perseverance of the Saints could easily end up with a false sense of security regarding sin, righteousness and working out their salvation with fear and trembling.

Salvation is an amazing thing and there is much the LORD does in our hearts and live
We are a new creation [2 Cor 5:17]. God places His Spirit within us [Gal4:6]; He rescues us from

¹ http://www.cfestus.com/books/taylor_calvinism.htm

² <http://www.auburn.edu/~allenkc/openhse/calvinism.html> (Calvinism Critiqued - by a Former Calvinist, Steve Jones)

³ <http://www.christianconversationsnow.com/2011/02/07/r-c-sproul-calvinism/#sthash.173pycOU.dpuf>

⁴ <http://bjorkbloggen.com/2012/10/22/the-unbiblical-tulip-five-points-of-calvinism-stands-or-falls-together/>

Satan's kingdom and brings us into the kingdom of Jesus [Col 1:13]; He carries out his work in us unto the day of Christ Jesus [Phil 1:6]; And He works in us to will and do His good pleasure. [Phil 2:13].

While all these [and this is just a small subset of all the Lord does in us and for us] highlight the work God does for us regarding our salvation, we still see in Scripture many warnings regarding falling away. These would be unnecessary if falling away were not possible.

Perseverance is a combination of the power of God and the faith of man

- 1 Peter 1:3-9 KJV Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, (5) Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (6) Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: (7) That **the trial of your faith**, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: (8) Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: (9) **Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.**
 - **kept by the power of God** - this is God's part
 - **through faith** - this is our contribution. The faith that keeps us is one that endures trials and lasts unto the end

The working of God and man

- Philippians 2:12-13 NIV (12) Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling, (13) **for it is God who works in you** to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Can a Christian Lose His Salvation?

A couple of caveats

- I don't believe that every time a Christian sins he loses his salvation and must be saved all over again. There is a process of sanctification where we grow incrementally to become more like Jesus. On this road of growth to maturity we may sin. When we do we are taught to confess and forsake them, get up and keep moving forward, not to get saved again.
 - 1 John 1:9 NIV If we **confess our sins**, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
 - Proverbs 28:13 ESV Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who **confesses and forsakes** them will obtain mercy.
 - Proverbs 24:16 ESV for **the righteous falls seven times and rises again**, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity.
- Though we believe a person can lose their salvation, it is next to impossible for us to know when a person crosses the line to apostasy. This is the Lord's call not ours. We have stories like the prodigal son [Luke 15:32], and the man in Corinth who was excommunicated for

unrepentant sin [1 Cor 5:1-5] and later restored back into fellowship [2 Cor 2:6-8] that show God's heart is toward us even when we sin and repent. Yet there are other scriptures that show man can become hardened to the point of falling away or turning away - and in these cases the man is not remaining faithful unto the end. The Lord has kept up HIS side of the work, it is the man that has changed and walked away; and just like the story of the prodigal...when the man decides to get up and walk away, the Lord allows him to go, the man has the freewill to choose.

- John 6:66-68 ESV After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. (67) So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" (68) Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,

Falling away due to bad doctrine

Chose justification by the law - fallen from grace

Galatians 5:1-4 ESV For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. (2) Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. (3) I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. (4) **You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.**

Fallen Away - Strong's = to drop away; specifically be driven out of one's course; figuratively to lose, become inefficient: - be cast, fail, fall (away, off), take none effect.

- This is talking about believers who were severed from Christ being seduced to follow the law. They chose justification by the law rather than justification that comes from Christ. [see Galatians 1:6 KJV I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:]

Led away with the error of the wicked - the twisting of scripture

2 Peter 3:16-17 KJV As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own **destruction**. (17) Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being **led away with the error** of the wicked, **fall** from your own steadfastness.

- Note the warning (beware) is to the "beloved" (vs 17) -- a believer who is now steadfast
- These have twisted scripture to their own **destruction**
 - Mat 7:13 KJV Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to **destruction**, and many there be which go in thereat:
- The Greek word used for **error** is also found here
 - James 5:19-20 KJV Brethren, **if any of you do err from the truth**, and one convert him; (20) Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the **error** of his way **shall save a soul from death**, and shall hide a multitude of sins.
- The Greek word used for **fall** is also found here in Gal 5:4
 - Gal 5:4 KJV Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are **fallen** from grace.

Giving heed to seducing spirits

1 Timothy 4:1 KJV Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

- Note they are departing from the faith - you can't depart from something you are not first a part of

Depart - Strong's to remove, that is, (actively) instigate to revolt; usually (reflexively) to desist, desert, etc.: - depart, draw (fall) away, refrain, withdraw self. The Greek word for **depart** is used in these verses.

- Luk 8:13 KJV They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation **fall away**.
- Heb 3:12 KJV Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in **departing** from the living God.

Rejecting faith and a good conscience = suffering shipwreck

1 Timothy 1:18-21 "fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. Among these are HYMENAEUS and Alexander"

Rejected - Strong's to push off, figuratively to reject: - cast away, put away (from), thrust way (from)

- Acts 7:39 KJV To whom our fathers would not obey, but **thrust him from them**, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,
- Acts 13:46 KJV Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing **ye put it from you**, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

Shipwrecked

- **Hymenaeus is not content to suffer his own shipwreck, he upsets or subverts the faith of others [to overturn]**
 - 2 Timothy 2:16-18 But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are HYMENAEUS and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and thus **they upset the faith of some**.
- **To subvert is the same Greek word used here**
 - Tit 1:9-11 KJV Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. 10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who **subvert** whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

Straying from the truth

James 5:19-20 "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way **will save his soul from death**, and will cover a multitude of sins."

- A person straying from the truth is heading down a road that leads to death

Falling away due to sin

Hebrews 6:4-9 For [it] [is] impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 ***if they fall away***, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put [Him] to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: 8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. 9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

- It is impossible because there is no other remedy for sin
- This is a person who was deeply involved in the things of God - yet fell away
- What can we say? - Jesus' way doesn't work, try something else???

Hebrews 10:26 For ***if we sin willfully*** after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

- There is no other sacrifice for sin than the blood of Jesus

2 Peter 2:20-21 For if, ***after they have escaped the pollutions of the world*** through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are ***again entangled*** in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having ***known*** [it], to ***turn*** from the holy commandment delivered to them.

- They have escaped and become entangled again
- They have known it, and yet willingly turn from it

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 KJV (1) Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, (2) That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. (3) Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, **except there come a falling away first**, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

Exhortations to persevere

These exhortations to continue would be unnecessary if eternal security or the concept of "once saved-always saved" were true.

We must continue in the faith and not be moved

Colossians 1:21-23 KJV And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled (22) In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in his sight: (23) ***If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away*** from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

- Christ reconciled us to present us holy, unblameable and unreprieveable
- IF WE CONTINUE (abide or remain)
 - Rom 11:22-23 KJV Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou **continue** in his goodness:

otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. 23 And they also, if they **abide** not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again.

1Ti 6:9-12 NIV Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. **Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.** 11 But you, man of God, **flee** from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. 12 **Fight** the good fight of the faith. **Take hold** of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

- Flee
- Fight the good fight of faith
- Take hold of eternal life

We must hold our confidence/faith

Hebrews 3:12-15 KJV Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you **an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.** (13) But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (14) For we are made partakers of Christ, **if we hold** the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; (15) While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

- Concern about a heart of unbelief - departing from the living God
- Concern that we would not be hardened through sin's deceitfulness
- We are made partakers of Christ -- IF WE HOLD our confidence stedfast unto the end
- Hold = to hold down (fast)
 - Heb 3:6 KJV But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, **if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.**

We must stand by faith - or be cut off

Rom 11:19-22 NIV You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." 20 Granted. But **they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith.** Do not be arrogant, but tremble. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. 22 Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. **Otherwise, you also will be cut off.**

- Being "cut off" for the Christian is the same as being "broken off" for the Jews
- Jews were broken off because of unbelief - we stand by faith

Hold firmly to the word

1Co 15:1-2 NIV Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 **By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you.** Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

- Hold firmly is also used here - Luk 8:15 KJV But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, **keep** it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

There are warnings about continuing in sin and forfeiting heaven

A person who is wanting to follow Christ cannot continue to live in these sins...The idea of "Once saved always saved" flies in the face of these very clear warnings. We are responsible and accountable for our sins.

Ephesians 5:1-8 NIV Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children (2) and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (3) But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. (4) Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. (5) For of this you can be sure: **No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a person is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.** (6) Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. (7) Therefore do not be partners with them. (8) For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NIV (9) **Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men (10) nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Galatians 5:19-21 NIV The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; (20) idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions (21) and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that **those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

Revelation 21:6-8 NIV He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. (7) Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. (8) But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--**they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur.** This is the second death."

A Comment about 1 John 2:19

They went out from us - which shows they were not of us

1 John 2:19 is a scripture often used by Calvinists when trying to explain how backsliding or a person "falling away" fits into their idea of Perseverance of the Saints. Since they don't believe the elect can fall away they would say he was never a Christian to begin with.

1 John 2:19-29 KJV **They went out from us**, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that **they were not all of us.** (20) But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. (21) I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. (22) Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. (23) Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. (24) Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. (25) And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. (26) These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. (27) But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things,

and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. (28) And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. (29) If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

- The context of this is not speaking of believers who have left the community, it is speaking of false teachers similar to what we see in Acts 15:24 KJV
 - Forasmuch as we have heard, that ***certain which went out from us*** have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:
- The remainder of the context confirms this is speaking of false teachers
 - He explains we have the Holy Spirit who teaches us truth (vs 20 & 27)
 - We have the ability to know truth (vs 21)
 - These false teachers are the liars (vs 22 & 23)
 - These things have I written concerning those who seduce you (vs 26)

SUMMARY

Be Encouraged - He is on our side - If God is for us - who can be against us?

These scriptures reveal God's involvement in aiding us in our salvation, sanctification and glorification. Though we must choose right from wrong, though we must accept responsibility for our own sin, though we must set our heart to continue in the faith and though we must guard our hearts with truth and stand against temptation, it is so encouraging to know the LORD is with us in all we do and working in us to do His good will. While we believe a person CAN fall away, we also believe it is difficult. We believe that God has done and will continue to do his part to ensure our success in walking with him. Our is to stand in faith and cooperate with His work in us.

- Jeremiah 32:40. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me."
- Romans 16:25. "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ...."
- 1 Corinthians 10:13. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."
- Ephesians 5:25. "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."
- 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."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24. "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it."

- 2 Thessalonians 3:3. “But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.”
- 2 Timothy 4:18. “And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!”¹⁵³
- Hebrews 12:2. “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”
- Jude 24. “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy....”

Clark H. Pinnock, in writing in his book, *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, gives this testimony of what happened to him as he studied the book of Hebrews.

“I held onto this view (concerning his view on eternal security) until about 1970, when one of the links in the chain of the tight Calvinian logic broke. It had to do with the doctrine of perseverance of the saints, likely the weakest link in the Calvinian logic, scripturally speaking. I was teaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School at the time and attending to the doctrine particularly in the book of Hebrews.

*If in fact believers enjoy the kind of absolute security Calvinism had taught me they do, I found I could not make very good sense of the vigorous exhortations to persevere (e.g., **Hebrews 3:12 KJV Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.**) or the awesome warnings not to fall away from Christ (e.g., **Hebrews 10:26 KJV For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins**), which the book address to Christians. It began to dawn on me that my security in God was linked to my faith-union with Christ and that God is teaching us here the extreme importance of maintaining and not forsaking this relationship .*

The exhortations and the warnings could only signify that continuing in the grace of God was something that depended at least in part on the human partner. And once I saw that, the logic of Calvinism was broken in principle, and it was only a matter of time before the larger implications of its breaking would dawn on me. The thread was pulled, and the garment must begin to unravel, as indeed it did.”⁵

⁵ The Grace of God and the Will of Man, edited by Clark H. Pinnock (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers (1989 and reprinted in 1995), 17.