

Perseverance and Assurance

Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 17: Of the Perseverance of the Saints

1. They, whom God hath accepted in His 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.
2. 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 of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.
3. Nevertheless, they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and, for a time, continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves

Biblical basis

- Luke 22:31-32; John 6:37-39; Rom. 8:29-30; 1 Cor. 1:8-9; 1 John 2:18-19

The call to persevere

- “He who stands firm to the end will be saved.” (Matt. 10:22)
- “Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.” (Rom. 11:22)
- “Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.” (2 Pet. 1:10)
- “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” (2 Cor. 13:5)

The “Lordship Salvation” controversy

- Can you be a “carnal Christian”?
- Can you accept Jesus as Savior but not as Lord?
- Can you be justified without being sanctified?
- Once a believer has made a public profession of faith, will they remain saved even if they continue to walk in disobedience?

What about apostasy?

- “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.” (2 Pet. 2:1)
 - “...Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.” (2 Pet. 2:3)
 - Visible/invisible church (see WCF 25)

- “For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.” (Heb 6:4-6)
- “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. 10:26-29)
 1. **Arminian view:** these are true believers who exercise saving faith temporarily, but then fall away and lose their salvation.
 2. **Hypothetical warning:** these are true believers, but they don’t exist in the real world. The threat serves to spur us to faith.
 3. **Loss of rewards:** these are true believers, but they are not losing their salvation, but rather merely some of their heavenly rewards.
 4. **Visible church members:** these are not true believers. They appear so outwardly for a time, but their apostasy proves their insincerity.
 - “For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.” (Heb. 6:7-8)
 - This wasn’t fertile land that turned bad; it was never fertile to begin with.
 - Parable of the sower (Matt. 13:1-9).
 - “Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.” (Heb. 6:9; cf. Heb. 7:25)

Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 18: Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation

1. Although hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes, and carnal presumptions of being in the favour of God, and estate of salvation; which hope of theirs shall perish: yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love Him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good conscience before Him, may, in this life, be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.
2. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith, founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God: which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.