

The Doctrine of the Preservation and Perseverance of the Saints

Wayne Grudem has defined the doctrine of perseverance this way: “The perseverance of the saints means that all those who are truly born again will be kept by God’s power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again” (*Systematic Theology*, p. 788).

I. All Who Are Truly Born Again Will Persevere to the End

Psalm 37:23-24

John 6:37-40; 10:24-30

Romans 8:30-39

1 Peter 1:3-5

Charles Spurgeon offers this explanation of Psalm 37:24 in his *Treasury of David*:

“*Though he fall.*” Disasters and reverses may lay him low; he may, like Job, be stripped of everything; like Joseph, be put in prison; like Jonah, be cast into the deep. “*He shall not be utterly cast down.*” He shall not be altogether prostrate. He shall be brought on his knees, but not on his face; or, if laid prone for a moment he shall be up again ere long. No saint shall fall finally or fatally. Sorrow may bring us to the earth, and death may bring us to the grave, but lower we cannot sink, and out of the lowest of all we shall arise to the highest of all. “*For the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.*” Condescendingly, with his own hand, God upholds his saints; he does not leave them to mere delegated agency, he affords personal assistance. Even in our falls the Lord gives a measure of sustaining. Where grace does not keep from going down, it shall save from keeping down. Job had double wealth at last, Joseph reigned over Egypt, Jonah was safely landed. It is not that the saints are strong, or wise, or meritorious, that therefore they rise after every fall, but because God is their helper, and therefore none can prevail against them. (e-Sword)

Robert Reymond’s comments on John 6:37-40 are instructive:

A Highly significant feature of Jesus’ promise here is that he states that he came to do his Father’s will, and that his Father’s will for him is that he lose none of those whom the Father savingly gives him but raise them up in the last day. This means that if the Son should fail either initially to save all who the Father gives him or finally to consummate their salvation in the Eschaton by raising them up from death to glory, he will have violated his Father’s will for him. This, we may be sure, he will never do. Consequently, Jesus teaches here the certainty of the elect’s salvation, from its initiation to its consummation. (*A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, p. 783)

II. Only Those Who Persevere to the End Have Been Truly Born Again

John 8:31-32

Colossians 1:21-23

Hebrews 3:14

1 John 2:19; 2:29

Thus we have seen revealed in Scripture the twin concepts of *preservation* and *perseverance*. We have seen that God preserves us in faith by enabling us to persevere. We cannot persevere without His enabling grace. As Peter said, we are “kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:5). The Apostle Paul stated essentially the same idea in his epistle to the Philippians, when he said, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12-13).

We *work out* what God *works in* us. We persevere in faith and repentance because God, who has given us faith and repentance in the first place, enables us to do so.