



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 196

The next logical question that comes up for those who have been justified and are being sanctified is whether they will continue in this state as Christians until the end, growing in their faith until they die, or is there a possibility that they may fall away from Christ and lose their salvation.

Throughout church history this question has been answered differently by different theological traditions. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches teach that a believer can fall from the state of grace and finally suffer eternal loss. Arminian theology (including Wesleyan, Methodist, and majority of Evangelical churches) also affirms that a believer can lose his salvation, and that believers' perseverance is dependent on their continual faith in Christ, obedience and good works. Lutheran theology also teaches that it is possible for a believer to fall from salvation.

**Perseverance of the saints** – Only Reformed theology affirms without any ambiguity that a true believer can never lose his salvation. In Reformed theology this doctrine is known as the “perseverance of the saints,” represented by the “P” in the acronym “TULIP” or the five points of Calvinism. The Westminster Confession Faith declares, “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” (Chapter 17, Section 1).

**Proof from the Bible** – There are a tremendous number of verses in the Bible, Old and New Testaments, which explicitly or implicitly affirm the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Believers in the Old Testament knew that the God who had saved them would also keep them forever (Psalm 37:28; 94:14; 97:10; 145:20; Isaiah 45:17). One of the greatest passages in the Old Testament regarding God's preserving of His people is Psalm 121, a magnificent hymn of assurance, describing God as His people's everlasting helper, keeper, protector, and preserver.

There are many passages in the New Testament which teach the same principle. In John 6:39-40 Jesus is saying that He has come to do the will of His Father, which is to keep and raise up all whom the Father has given Him, that is, believers, without losing any of them (John 6:54). This is Christ's promise to His Father. In John 10:27-29 Jesus is saying that He gives His people eternal life, they will never perish, and that no one is able to snatch any of His people from His hand. This is Christ's promise to His people.

Majority of Christians object saying, “Yes, no one can take a person out of God's hand, but the person himself can willingly leave or reject Christ.” Such a statement makes no sense, for “no one” means “no one!” There are no exceptions. Those who affirm that a believer can lose his salvation are in reality saying that the eternal, sovereign, and decretive will of the Father can be defeated; and that Christ, who came to accomplish His Father's will, is not able to keep His promise to His Father and to His people, and thus can lose those given Him by the Father! Such a view is not only illogical but also in absolute contradiction to the teachings of the Bible (Job 42:2; Psalm 33:11; Isaiah 14:24; 46:9-11).

Reformed theology teaches that all that God has decreed, including the salvation and perseverance of His people, He will bring to pass with absolute certainty, for the execution of His plans is not left conditioned upon man, angels, demons, Satan, or anything outside of Him.

The apostles had unwavering confidence that the almighty God would sustain and preserve His people, presenting them blameless at the end, when His glory would be revealed (Ephesians 5:27; Colossians 1:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 2 Timothy 1:12; 4:18; Jude 24-25). Such passages are a tremendous source of assurance, confidence, and joy for us believers, knowing that our Lord who has saved us has also promised, willing, and able to keep us to the end and evermore.