



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 197

What does a believer's perseverance depend on? The Westminster Confession of Faith provides an excellent and precise answer to this question (Chapter 17, Section 2).

Immutability of the decree of election – First, the believer's perseverance is based upon the immutability of the decree of election. What God has decreed He brings to fulfillment as planned without any uncertainties. God's plans do not change because He Himself does not change. The outcome of all that God has decreed is assured because it is not contingent on anything outside of God. And that certainly includes the decree of election, that is, God's choosing of people for salvation.

Romans 8:29-30, known as the golden chain of salvation, represents an unbreakable chain, which begins with foreknowledge and ends in glorification. Paul is saying that all those whom God foreknew He also predestined, and all those He predestined He also called, and all those He called He also justified, and all those He justified He also glorified (Romans 11:29; Philippians 1:6). Not only are God's plans irrevocable and immutable, He also has the sovereign and absolute power to fulfill every one of them perfectly, and that includes the complete and final salvation of every one of His elect (1 Peter 1:3-5).

Free and unchangeable love of God – Secondly, the believer's perseverance flows from the free and unchangeable love of God. The Hebrew word "khesed" translated as mercy or lovingkindness, signifies God's special love for His people, which is eternally unceasing, immutable, and unfailing, and thus the Bible says we are not consumed (Psalm 21:7; 103:17; Isaiah 54:10; Lamentations 3:22-23; Malachi 3:6).

The word "foreknowledge" in Romans 8:29 is not referring to God foreseeing what people would do in the future and then electing them; rather, it refers to God's decision in eternity past to enter into a personal, loving, and redemptive relationship with certain people. God's election of people is not contingent on God seeing any merit in man; rather, it is purely based on His decision to foreknow certain people in a special and salvific way. And Paul says that all those whom God loved in such a way (foreloved), He also predestined, called, justified, and finally glorified (Romans 8:30; Ephesians 1:3-5). Thus it is exceedingly clear that not only our salvation but also our perseverance is based upon such an amazing love, a love that is free and unchangeable, a love that will never let us go (1 John 3:1).

Efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ – Thirdly, the Confession states that the believer's perseverance rests upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ. Contrary to popular view, nothing in or done by man is the meritorious basis of his salvation (Romans 4:4; 11:6); rather, our salvation solely rests upon the merit of Christ and what He has done, fully and efficaciously satisfying the justice of God for us (Romans 3:21-26; Titus 3:4-7). The efficacy of Christ's redemption is perfect and eternal, once for all, and for all time (1 Corinthians 1:30-31; Hebrews 9:11-12; 10:14).

In addition to the merit of Christ the Confession also states that our perseverance rests upon the efficacy of the intercession of Christ. During His earthly ministry Jesus interceded for His disciples, as well as for all those who through His Word would believe in Him in future ages (John 17:9, 11, 15, 20, 24). The priestly office and ministry of Christ did not end on earth but it continues now in heaven (Hebrews 8:1-2). As our High Priest in heaven, Jesus is representing us before the Father; He is continuously praying for our spiritual growth and perseverance (John 17:20; Romans 8:33-34; Hebrews 2:18; 4:15-16; 7:25); He is defending us from all of our enemies (1 John 5:18); and He is rendering our worship, prayers, service, and all that we do, which are lacking and stained with sin, acceptable to God (1 Peter 2:4-5).

As with His life and death, Jesus' priestly intercession is also perfect and efficacious, which the Father hears and answers (John 11:42), and which saves us to the uttermost.