

Perseverance

Definition: 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.

A. All Those Truly Born Again Will Persevere to the End

- Jesus promises that His believers will remain with Him forever. (John 6:38-40, 10:27-29, 3:36)
- It would be unjust for God to condemn those whose sins were paid for by Christ. (Rom 8:1)
- Our future glorification has already been predestined by God. (Rom 8:30)
- The Holy Spirit indwelling us acts as God' s guarantee or down payment. (Eph 1:13-14)
- God guards our salvation, by means of our faith, until the end. (1 Peter 1:5)

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

- In 1 Peter 1:5, God works *through our faith*, not apart from our faith.
- Continuing in God' s word is evidence of saving faith. (John 8:31-32, Matt 10:22, Col 1:22-23)
- Our continued trust in the person of Christ is evidence of saving faith. (Heb 3:14)
- Those who fall away were never saved in the first place. (1 John 2:19)

C. Those Who Finally Fall Away May Give Many External Signs of Conversion

- Jesus' disciples could not predict that Judas would betray Jesus.
- There may be servants of Satan in the church fellowship. (Gal 2:4, 2 Cor 11:26, 11:15)
- It is possible for men to do mighty works in Christ' s name, yet not be believers. (Matt 7:21-23)
- It is possible for men to hear the Gospel with joy, but have no saving faith. (Mark 4:5-6, 4:16-17)
- Those who finally fall away may look like Christians before falling away. (Heb 6:4-6)

D. What About Verses That Seem to Imply that I Can Lose Salvation?

1. Heb 6:4-6

- “once been enlightened” - understanding the Gospel, not necessarily responding with saving faith.
- “tasted the heavenly gift” - tasting is a temporary trial; eating does not always follow.
- “partakers of the Holy Spirit” - wide range of meaning in Greek, including loose association.
- “restore *again* to repentance” - not all repentance (e.g. worldly sorrow) leads to saving faith.
- The author is concerned about church members who are about to fall away; he is warning them.
- For unbelievers, a repeated familiarity with the blessings of God can actually harden them against conversion; they have already “tried God” and rejected Him.
- In the next two verses (Heb 6:7-8), unbelievers are compared to land that *never* bore real fruit.
- In the next verse (Heb 6:9), the author returns to addressing believers. The “better things, *also* (Gr. *ka*) belonging to salvation” are listed in Heb 6:10-12.

2. Heb 10:26-31

- “blood of the covenant that sanctified him” - Grudem & Strong claim this is an external sanctification, not one that comes with conversion. See also 1 Cor 7:14, Heb 9:13, Matt 23:17.
- The verse refers to someone who has received some beneficial moral influence via the church.

3. Rev 3:5 - This verse does not imply that Jesus *might* blot out some names out of the book of life.

4. 1 Sam 16:14 - The departure of the Holy Spirit from Saul means a leadership empowering, not salvation

E. What Can Give a Believer Genuine Assurance?

- Present trust in Christ for salvation (Col 1:23, Heb 3:14, John 3:16)
- Evidence of regeneration (Rom 8:14-16, Gal 5:22-23, Matt 7:16-20, 1 John 2:23-24, 1 John 2:4-6)
- Long-term pattern of Christian growth (2 Peter 1:5-7) confirms our success (2 Peter 1:10).
- Those who do not display these traits must be warned that they are in danger of falling away.
 - ◆ Arminian position: they lost their salvation; Calvinistic position: they were never saved.

Death and the Intermediate State

A. Why Do Christians Die?

1. Not Punishment for Christians
 - All punishment for our individual sins has already been paid. (Rom 8:1)
2. Final Outcome of Living in a Fallen World
 - Just as God chose not to immediately apply the redemptive benefits of Christ, He chose not to immediately remove the results of sin in the world.
 - The last aspect of a fallen world to be removed is death. (1 Cor 15:26, 1 Cor 15:54-55)
3. Our Sanctification
 - God sometimes uses hardship & suffering in order to strengthen us. (Heb 5:8, 2:10, Rom 8:28)
 - Aging, weakness, sickness, & eventual death are sufferings that God allows to sanctify us.
 - We become more like Christ as we approach death. (Phil 3:10, 1:20)
4. Union With Christ
 - We imitate Christ, coming into closer union with Him. (Rom 8:17, 1 Peter 4:13, Phil 3:10)
5. Prioritizing God Versus Preserving Our Lives
 - Obedience to God is more important than preserving our physical lives. (Acts 20:24)
 - Many OT saints accepted martyrdom over sin. (Heb 11:35)
 - We must love God more than our lives here on earth. (Rev 12:11, 2:10)

B. How We Should View Death

1. Our Own Death
 - There is no reason for the believer to fear death. (Rom 8:38-39, Heb 2:15)
 - Instead, we should look upon death with joy. (2 Cor 5:8, Phil 1:21-23, Rev 14:13)
2. Christian Friends and Relatives
 - Sorrow comes from the loss of fellowship. (Acts 8:2, John 11:35, Acts 20:37-38, Phil 2:27)
 - But hope & joy should also be present. (1 Thess 4:13, Rev 14:13, Ps 116:15, 1 Cor 15:55-57)
 - Worship to God is appropriate at this time. (2 Sam 12:20, Job 1:20-21)
3. Unbelievers
 - There is no joy of assurance that they have gone to heaven.
 - Yet, it is possible that they might have accepted Christ in their heart just before death.
 - It is wrong to give public indication that the deceased has gone to heaven.
 - It is helpful at such times to recount the good things a person did during his life. (2 Sam 1:19-25)

C. What Happens When People Die?

1. Believers' Souls
 - Death is a separation of the soul (spirit) from the body.
 - After death, a believer' s soul goes immediately into the presence of God. (Luke 23:43, 2 Cor 5:8, Phil 1:23, Heb 12:23)
- a. No Such Thing as Purgatory
 - Roman Catholic position: *purgatory* is the place where souls go to be further purified of sin before being admitted into heaven.
 - Primarily based on 2 Maccabees 12:42-45 found in the Apocrypha, which is not accepted as canonical Scripture by Protestants.
 - Catholics also cite 2 Tim 1:17-18, Matt 12:32, 1 Cor 3:15, Matt 5:26; see Grudem pages 818-819 for a refutation that these verses support purgatory.

- Conclusion: No Biblical support for the doctrine of purgatory and this doctrine contradicts Biblical teaching that the souls of believers enter God' s presence immediately after death.
- b. No Such Thing as “Soul Sleep”
- The doctrine: when believers die, they go into a state of unconscious existence until Christ returns.
 - Based on the Bible using the word “sleep” to denote death. (Matt 9:24, 27:52, John 11:11, ...)
 - Also based on certain OT passages that suggest the dead are unconscious. (Ps 6:5, 115:17)
 - The Bible uses “sleep” as a metaphor for “death” to indicate its temporary nature. (John 11:11-13)
 - Psalms 115:18 contrasts the eternal worship from believers versus the dead referenced in 115:17.
 - The souls of righteous men who have already died are present now in heaven. (Heb 12:22-24, Rev 6:10, Rev 7:9-10)
 - Conclusion: No Biblical support for the doctrine of soul sleep and this doctrine contradicts Biblical teaching that the souls of past believers are in God' s presence now.
- c. Old Testament Believers
- The doctrine of *limbus patrum* (limbo): the souls of believers who died before Christ' s resurrection did not enjoy the blessings of heaven, but went into a place of waiting for Christ' s work of redemption to be completed.
 - Scarcity of Bible verses that discuss the state of OT believers from their death until Christ.
 - OT examples of enjoying heaven immediately: Enoch (Gen 5:24), Elijah (2 Kings 2:11), Moses & Elijah (Matt 17:3).
 - Jesus refers to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as alive, not dead. (Matt 22:32)
 - The account of Lazarus (Luke 16:25); however, if this is a parable, then we can not infer too much other than the main point: some men will never accept Christ, even if He rises from the dead.
 - Grudem: OT believers' souls went immediately to heaven upon their death.
- d. Should We Pray for the Dead?
- The fate of man' s soul is fixed upon his death.
 - Praying for the dead is waste of prayer time; we should instead pray according to God' s will.
2. Unbelievers' Souls
- The Bible gives no hope of a “second chance” to trust in Christ after death.
 - There is a judgment that occurs soon after death. (Heb 9:27)
 - Judgment is based on what happened in this life. (Matt 25:31-46, Rom 2:5-10, 2 Cor 5:10)
 - Condemnation is a result of man' s sin (both imputed from Adam and committed due to a polluted nature), not his refusal to accept Christ.
 - Punishment lasts forever. (Matt 25:41 & 46)
 - Unbelievers' bodies will not be raised until the day of final judgment. (Rev 20:12, 20:15)