Of the Perseverance of the Saints

The Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 17

I. WCF 17.1: A Definition of Perseverance

A. Perseverance of the *saints*.

i. _____, whom God accepted, granted new life, & sanctified, persevere.

ii. If a Christian falls away, he was never truly a saint (1 John 2:19).

iii. But also: Apostate sinners can be _____ by God's grace.

iv. God _____ us by His grace, but we are the ones that persevere.

B. *Perseverance* of the saints:

i. A saint can neither _____ nor _____ fall from the state of grace.

ii. Jesus doesn't _____ eternal life to everyone who believes in him; He gives it.

C. The perseverance of the saints is a unique doctrine in Reformed theology.

i. Roman catholicism teaches that perseverance or apostasy depends on _____.

ii. Lutheranism teaches that true believers can _____ their salvation.

iii. Eternal security: Saints _____ lose their salvation, but they can fail to persevere.

iv. But we believe in perseverance b/c Scripture teaches it (John 6:37–39; 10:27–30).

v. We aren't the first to believe this either: Ignatius, Tertullian, & Augustin did!

II. WCF 17.2: On Whom Does Perseverance Depend?

A. Does perseverance depend on the saints? We have to keep ourselves in the state of grace?

i. The power to persevere, even the _____, doesn't come from us.

ii. If perseverance depended on us, _____ would persevere.

B. Perseverance wholly depends on God.

i. We _____ because God _____ us.

ii. We can't lose our salvation b/c God's purpose of election can't fail or change.

iii. And God's election doesn't change b/c the _____ of the Father doesn't change.

iv. And Jesus's life, death, & resurrection are powerful to save us & keep us saved.

v. The _____ who lives in our hearts will keep & restore us from falling.

vi. And the Covenant of Grace can't be broken, because it is _____.

III. WCF 17.3: A Distinction in Perseverance.

A. Despite the beautiful truth of our perseverance, this doctrine shouldn't lull us to sleep.

i. It should bring us comfort & confidence, but not complacency or overconfidence.

ii. We shouldn't think that the doctrine of Perseverance makes us _____.

iii. The World, the Flesh, and the Devil might cause us to fall into sin.

iv. And neglecting the _____ might cause us to fall.

B. What effects might such a fall have in the life of a saint?

i. Our sin affects our fellowship and communion with _____.

ii. Our own consciences are burdened with our sin, we lack peace & joy.

iii. We might _____, so that they fall into the same sins.

iv. And the Lord _____ those he loves.

IV. Practical takeaways: The doctrine of perseverance…

A. Emphasizes the serious nature of a believer's sin and backsliding.

B. Exhorts us to be diligent in fighting our sin and seeking God's grace.

C. Exalts God's grace as the source of perseverance.

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Chapter 17: *Of the Perseverance of the Saints*

1. Those whom God has 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 in it to the end, and be eternally saved.

2. This perseverance of the saints does not depend 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 of which arises also its certainty and infallibility.

3. Nevertheless, they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalence of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and, for a time, continue in them: by which 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.