

Transcript 193

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. This is episode 6 in our series of what is Calvinism? You might ask, there's only five points of Calvinism, how can you have six episodes? Well, we did an intro, kind of a breakdown of the basics of Calvinism, and now we're going through the different five points. So this is episode 6, but also we're covering the fifth point of Calvinism, which is the perseverance of the Saints. If I could summarize what the fifth point in one verse would be, Romans 10:13, which says he who endures to the end will be saved. So perseverance of the Saints is also known as eternal security or once saved, always saved or kind of which the point was actually preservation of the Saints rather than perseverance of the saints. But Calvinism has a slightly different way of how they getting they get to eternal security than other way. So that's kind of we're going to be discussing today and how it relates to the other four points. So if you've not watched the other episodes, we'd invite you to do so.

Shea Houdmann

So join me again as always is Kevin, the managing editor have gotquestions.org. And Jeff, the managing editor of bibleref.com. So gentlemen, welcome once again. Thank you for continuing to enjoy, enjoy or join me for this conversation, maybe both I don't know. Kevin, why don't you start us off. What are some of the key scripture passages on the question of preservation of the Saints?

Kevin Stone

I'd be glad to share those, and I'm also I'm glad to say that I am resting in Jesus today. He did the work and I am saved as a result and I just I just praise his name. Some of the go to passages that teach preservation of the Saints or the perseverance of the Saints would be Ephesians 1, verses 13 and 14. Which says that believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise and that the spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchase possession to the praise of his glory. So Holy Spirit is the guarantee. He's the seal.

He's the gift of God that that guarantees that we will have that heavenly inheritance someday.

One of my favorites is Philippians one and verse six that says that he who began the good work in us, will continue it. He will complete it till the day of Jesus Christ. So that's, you know, he's it's his salvation from beginning to ending. And we are the beneficiaries of his faithfulness in our lives.

Kevin Stone

Romans Chapter 8 is a good passage too, that teaches the perseverance of the Saints. I'm not going to read all of this, but if you just take a look at verses 28 through 39, we see that, first of all, no one can bring a charge against God's elect because it is Christ who justifies. It's Christ who rose again on our behalf. So nobody can condemn us, including the accuser of the brethren, Satan. He cannot accuse us. Nothing is gonna stick. Those charges won't stick against God's elect. Secondly, nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Third God makes everything work together for the good of those who love him, the good of the elect God is working all things together for good. And then 4th, all whom God saves will be glorified. We've talked about that passage before, that Golden chain of salvation that goes from predestination and calling to justification, to glorification. And it looks like everybody that God calls ends up being glorified in the end. God loves his children so much that nothing can separate them from him.

Kevin Stone

And then the Good Shepherd passage, John Chapter 10, where Jesus says my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me and I give eternal life to them. They will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the father's hand. I and the father are one. And it just seems in this passage as Jesus is talking about his sheep that he leads and he he keeps, he guards, he just he he really piles it on here. He says it's I give them eternal life, never perish. I have them in my hand. My father has them in his hand. They're not getting away. God's not

losing his grip. And this is this is a wonderful promise here from our Good Shepherd that he keeps his sheep.

Shea Houdmann

Excellent, Kevin, those are definitely some of the Scripture passages I would go to as well. I just want to clarify, I misspoke here at the beginning. He endures to the end, will be saved as actually Matthew 24:13. I said as Romans 10:13. As soon as I said I was like, that's not right. Romans 10:13 is he who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Which is a great passage as well, but not a the one I was looking for. So it's Matthew 24:13. He who endures to the end will be saved. Kind of the key verse for the perseverance of the saints.

Jeff Laird

I wouldn't worry about it. Somebody on YouTube is right now typing a correction for that, even though we haven't even put this episode up. I'm that's that's how on the ball the critics have been with that.

Shea Houdmann

Of course, yeah.

Jeff Laird

But I appreciate these scripture passages that both of you guys are bringing up because this is the one aspect of of the five points that for me is the easiest just to give wholehearted agreement with, this idea that once a person is truly saved, that that salvation is permanent. And that's a tremendous source of comfort to me. I I get a lot of spiritual relief from reading things like Romans chapter 7 where somebody like Paul says I am. I am currently I am seeing this struggle in myself that the things I want to do I don't do and the things that I don't want to do I do. And there's this back and forth. I mean, who's going to save me from this? Thank God for the salvation we have in Jesus Christ. So perseverance of the Saints is important in that sense because I know that I make mistakes. I am not perfect. I have, you know, the sins of omission and Commission. And if perseverance of the Saints is not the case, then I and probably most

people we're living most of our lives in a state of being lost until we have an opportunity to correct.

Jeff Laird

Now some people who don't believe in perseverance of the Saints wouldn't take it that far, but then that that just is an open question. So from the Calvinist perspective, we see a lot of logic behind this. It flows very, very reasonably from the other points. If we are totally depraved, that means we can't do anything to save ourselves. We can't do anything to keep our salvation. If we are unconditionally elected, that means God's not saving people on the basis of who's going to cooperate. If the atonement is limited, he's only applying it to those who are going to cooperate. And irresistible grace would basically say that why would God irresistibly reach into somebody's life and bring them to actual salvation and then let that go or let that fall away. So in the the reformed structure, it's very logical. It makes a lot of sense. It's a conclusion that definitely you can understand it coming from there. And scripturally, it also does make a lot of sense. Kevin was bringing up scriptures, Shea you were bringing up scriptures. We see things in the Bible that just make it clear that God is the one giving the promise. He's not putting it on us. And if it was on us then we would start to see other contradictions, theological, doctrinal contradictions, not just with perseverance of the Saints, but with a lot of things that we think about salvation in general.

Shea Houdmann

Jeff, you're exactly right. The Calvinism because we've done this, each episode kind of show how the points linked to another. If if Jesus death on the cross, his blood being applied to us saves us, to say that we could then lose that salvation would be to make the death of Jesus on our behalf null and void. Which then questions how could such a precious gift be made null and void? How could someone for whom Christ has died be condemned? That's the whole logical flow of Calvinism. And one of the major points of Calvinism, why they think that the the limited atonement. If Jesus death guarantees the salvation of everyone who he died for, well

then he died for all everyone saved. Well, we don't obviously agree with that point, but you can see how that leads to eternal security or perseverance of the Saints. Because if Jesus is dying for someone and they eventually lose that salvation, well, then again, Jesus death would have been shed in vain for that person. So we don't buy that reasoning for getting to perseverance, but that we do agree with the Calvinism, at least on the conclusion. And once saved, always saved. Once salvation has been received, it is eternally secure.

Shea Houdmann

I don't particularly care for the term perseverance of the Saints, because lot of people see that they ohh I must persevere in order to maintain my salvation. That the perseverance is up to me. Well, that's actually not what Calvin is, Calvinists teach. They teach that if you are elect, you will persevere. They don't view the persevering as in any way earning your salvation or maintaining it. They said that's the reality about it. That's the impact. That's the effect that submission has. It will produce a person who perseveres in their faith. But again, I like the term preservation. To me, that communicates more that this is God's work in both saving us and keeping us saved rather than something that we have to do. And to me, my favorite verse on preservation is Jude verse 24 is to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious present without fault and great joy. To the only God our savior be glory, majesty, power and authority to Jesus Christ our Lord, be for all ages now and forever. Amen. It's to to him who is able to keep you from falling. That's God's work. So perseverance makes it sound like it's our job, but that's not what Calvinism teaches. The one who is elect will persevere. But still I prefer the term eternal security. Once they've always saved. Preservation because it puts the impetus for maintaining their solution on God where it belongs, biblically speaking.

Kevin Stone

That verse you just read Shea from Jude 1:24. I love that, that verse. And every time I hear it, I think of a song I used to play when I was working in radio. I would pull out that record album and play that song. The lyrics to that song were simply straight out of June 24 and it was

is a great song and a great truth that's being communicated in it. God has done so much for us. What it would mean for a Christian to lose salvation, if we start taking a look at the various scriptures and see all that God has done for us in saving us. It's just amazing because the Christian is a new creation. This is second Corinthians 5:17, which says that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. So for a Christian to lose his salvation, the new creation would have to be destroyed. God would have to, you know, just wipe out what he had done in that person's life. Christian is redeemed, scripture says First Peter 1:18 and 19, that we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. So for a Christian to lose salvation, God would have to revoke his purchase. A redemption is a purchase. God would have to, you know, return his purchase. And he paid for this, this individual with the precious blood of Christ. God's not going to return this investment.

Kevin Stone

A Christian is justified Romans 5 and verse one. We've been justified by faith. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. So for a Christian to lose salvation, God would have to go back on his word. He'd have to undeclare what he had previously declared, because justification is a declaration that a person is righteous. God would have to undeclare that. God would have to, after he had acquitted us at the divine bench, He would have to retry us and pronounce us guilty. He's already he's already pronounced us not guilty in Christ. He's not going to retry our case.

Kevin Stone

A Christian is promised eternal life, John 3:16. Whoever believes in Christ shall not perish but have eternal life. So what does the word eternal mean? I mean, if a Christian loses salvation, we're going to have to redefine the word eternal because it is obviously obviously just a temporary gift that God had given, if we lose that salvation. Christian is marked by God, and he's sealed by the spirit. I referenced this verse earlier in Ephesians chapter one talks about when we believed we were marked in Christ with a seal and is the promised Holy Spirit a

deposit guaranteeing our inheritance under the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of His glory. So for a Christian to not persevere, for a Christian, to not be preserved all the way to heaven, God would have to erase the mark, withdraw the spirit, cancel the deposit, break his promise, revoke the guarantee, keep the inheritance for himself, forego the praise and lessen his own glory.

Kevin Stone

Christian is guaranteed glorification. We talked about that passage in Romans Chapter 8, that golden chain of salvation. And then we also have in the Book of Romans the fact that God's call, gifts and calling are irrevocable. God's not gonna go back on the gifts that he gives. He's not gonna ask for them to be returned. So much more. God has adopted us into the family of Christ. If a Christian does not persevere, Christian is not preserved by God, then what does that mean? Does that mean that God's unadopts that person, God kicks him out of the family? It's unthinkable. All the things that God has done for us because salvation is, is his work in our lives and we are saved by his grace.

Jeff Laird

I appreciate all of those, Kevin, and that's it's the same logical process that makes sense to me is if if salvation is based on faith, not works, if it's based on the sacrifice of Christ and not our own ability. If it's a rebirth, if it's a new creation. If John tells us that, you can know that you have eternal life, that all speaks to it being some sort of one time permanent change. What's interesting is that we do see things in our lives, though that that present us with challenges in how we understand this and that is part of how some of the disagreements over this come up. And for that First Samuel 16:7 comes up for me, which is a statement that basically just says look only God knows what's going on in the heart. People see the outside appearance. So what happens is we see other believers who maybe they walk away from the faith supposedly and either come back or don't come back, or they commit a large sin or medium sin or little sin, and we start grappling with the idea of, ok, so what does that then mean in this context of

perseverance of the Saints? And we see all sorts of options, all over the place for that. We see everything from a sort of a hard line of of lordship salvation taken to an extreme, which says that any of those are simply recognition that that person is not actually saved. We see the exact opposite, which is a an extreme free Grace option. Which says that once a person has expressed some level of belief in Christ, then absolutely nothing about them is expected to change, and it doesn't matter what they say and what they do. That's really where the challenge of this comes.

Jeff Laird

I think theologically it becomes pretty obvious that once a person reaches true salvation, it cannot be revoked. What's tricky, legitimately tricky, and I understand that is understanding or determining the point at which a person has reached that spot. Or how do we, as human beings, recognize when somebody else has actually gotten to that place? And there's plenty of our little rhetorical and logical tricks that we can use. Some of us who believe in once saved, always saved, for example, there's an accusation that if somebody walks away from the faith after serving faithfully for a long time, and that person becomes a hating enemy of God, then the argument would be well, you're saying that that person did all those things, but they were never saved in the first place. Which is possible I suppose. It's also possible that the person is just going through a temporary apostasy.

Jeff Laird

The flip side of that, is people who believe that you can lose your salvation would basically make the same conclusion about the person. If they end their life in severe hatred and and opposition to God, we're pretty much agreeing on there. So even though perseverance of the Saints seems to be the most logical and the most theologically robust of these points, we're still in a place where we're trying to understand the mind of God and to some extent, we're still looking at this and going I get it. I know what I understand it, but there's still a little bit of this that's that's going to be a little bit beyond my ability as a human being to judge perfectly.

Shea Houdmann

As both you know, so many questions we get about this issue, eternal security and different angles from is eternal security a license to sin? As if you're saved, you can't lose your salvation. I mean, I can eat, drink and be merry. For tomorrow I die. Sort of had to do whatever and I'm still saved. Or you get the people, I don't understand how the passages in the Bible that warn against apostasy when they seem to be referring to believers. How does that work if they once they've always say because it wouldn't matter if I would have apostasied like you just said, Jeff.

Shea Houdmann

So, so many questions we get about this. And so many people who even oppose Calvinism will want to oppose this point, eternal security, perseverance of the Saints because of their opposition to Calvinism. But I can make a very robust argument for eternal security without Calvinism really being involved at all. And there are, there are many Arminianism or other people who take other theological positions other than Calvinism, who conclude that eternal security is biblical. They just get there by a different direction.

Shea Houdmann

So eternal security to me is the the most important of the five points in the sense that it has such a tremendous impact on how we live, how we understand salvation, how we relate to Christ, how we view it as a gift versus something we have to maintain. But it's also the most robust in that there are so many verses and passages in the Bible that teach this. That teach the salvation cannot be lost. Christ's purchase of our salvation is so perfect, so complete, so sufficient, there's nothing we could do that could cause it to be revoked, as all the scriptures that Kevin read. So this one is the one definitely the point I'm most passionate about. Whether I get there the way that Calvinists get there or not to me isn't the key thing. It's the conclusion that salvation is eternal, eternally secure because of what God has done through Christ, not because of anything that we do or don't do.

Kevin Stone

A lot of that, a lot of the things that we've been discussing here today I think are illustrated very well in the Pilgrim's progress, the classic by John Bunyan. I I love the book. It is thoroughly biblical. It's just full of Scripture. And it illustrates the the Christian walk in in so many very graphic ways. But one of the things that I like about the Pilgrim's progress just taking a birds eye view of it here, is that everybody who comes to the cross of Christ does make it to the celestial city in the end. They go through all kinds of difficulties and trials along the way. But everybody who comes to the cross makes it.

Kevin Stone

Now there are some characters in the book that try to bypass the cross. And they they come in another way. They they give excuses like, oh, I live a long way from that cross. I I I didn't wanna go all the way around out of my way to get there. I wanted just to start from from an easier point. And so we've got people like formalist, and hypocrisy, and buy ins, and ignorance. They all try to, they're they're all in the path. They're all in the path and they're they're looking like true followers for a while. But they didn't come to the cross and they never, none of them make it to the celestial city. But everybody who does, Christian and that's where his burden is lifted and it rolls into the empty tomb. And some of the some of the characters in the book are really seem like they're long shots. I mean, they had all kinds of impediments within themselves. And they they seemed like very unlikely candidates to make it to the celestial city. Because there is Mr. Fearing and there is ready to halt. There is Mr. Feeble mind, and much afraid, they have all kinds of impediments. But they make it by the grace of God and the help that the Lord gives. And the fact that they came to the cross first, that was their starting point and all of them make it to the celestial city. They leave their crutches behind. They leave all the other, they they leave those at the at the bank of the river and they enter the glory of the celestial city. And I just, I I love that picture of how the cross makes the difference. If you start at the cross, you do end up at the celestial city whatever difficulties you're run in along the way.

Jeff Laird

Yeah, Bunyan's work is good. It's nice to see those things put in that sort of story form. I won't make any jokes about blue oxes, because people will believe it and Kevin will be offended. So I'll let the trolls out there look it up and see what I'm talking about. The, the, the high view of this, I think, is the good thing. When I say high view, I mean that that story level, 30,000 foot view. One of the things that to me we can see in this is sometimes when you, when you look at a doctrine, when you look at an idea you realize that everything has to be connected. There has to be consistency between the different things that we believe. So one of the things that I've talked about when it comes to our concept of God is the idea that to understand all of God's attributes, you have to see that they sort of converge, like moving up a pyramid. What I mean by that is that at some point in time for these things to be real and to be true, you have to include other ideas. And I think that we see that with perseverance of the Saints, if we are going to accept these other doctrines, they all start to sort of converge together to this grace based, permanent, God willed, sovereign concept of what it means to believe.

Jeff Laird

The parallel values for that sometimes is is superheroes. In in comic books and movies one of the things that we don't do very well is we don't do that converging. If you have somebody who can run at the speed of light, then that person has to be able to think that fast. If they can't think that fast, they can't run that fast. If if somebody's strong enough to pick up a tank, then it doesn't make sense to be able to give them a an injection or a vaccination because their tissues need to be strong enough. You get this convergence. At some point in time to be infinitely fast you also have to be infinitely wise, infinitely strong, so on and so forth. You kind of see the same thing with perseverance of the Saints, where all these things start to come together. So when we try to object to it, we we see that in order to reject this idea of perseverance of the Saints, we have to move outside of that. You know, as we get closer to understanding all of these other concepts that we have about salvation and God, that it is entirely by grace through faith, that it is all God's

work. They all sort of converge together and you wind up with this very sort of narrow scope of what exactly it means for us to be true believers. And for what the Bible says. So there again, is another reason I think perseverance is good because it is so scripturally obvious, and it leads us in a direction that helps to support what the Bible says about these other doctrines of grace.

Shea Houdmann

Well said, Jeff. The like whether you call it the capstone or the conclusion of the five points of Calvinism, the doctrines of grace is Calvinist like to refer them to. This is the one that I'm all in. Wholeheartedly, buy in again, not necessarily the way that Calvinists get there, but with their inclusion, yes, I firmly, wholeheartedly agree. And it is such a vital part of my understanding of salvation, the idea that salvation could not be eternally secure in Christ, it's completely foreign to me. It would destroy the whole greatness of what God has provided.

Shea Houdmann

So many let's conclude this episode with just going more practical and personal each of us. Why the doctrine of eternal security is so precious to you? And for me, I'll start off. OK. Give you 2 a little time to think because I know I didn't prep for you this for ahead of time. But for me like a Romans 8:38 and 39, which is one of the ones we did mention earlier, for I'm sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor death, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And to me this assurance that nothing I can do could cause God to stop loving me and to stop loving me and this salvific sense of the salvation you've provided to Christ that I have received by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. To me that our eternal connection to the love of God is one of the key reasons why the doctrine of eternal security is so precious to me.

Kevin Stone

I love this doctrine because it takes away fear. I was saved at an early age. And and and I've I've always struggled with, you know, self doubt. And I know that I'm not worthy of salvation.

You know, I'm not worthy of heaven. I'm not worthy of God's love. And then I do something to prove it. Right. I I sin. And then I've got, I've got the accuser of the brethren and who's bringing stuff up. Bringing up stuff in my past. And Oh yeah, see, that's that's the not the way a Christian would act or whatever. And I I I have so often gone to these passages that we've discussed today. By the Good Shepherd holding on to his sheep and and all the rest, God's tight grip on us. And it just takes away fear as I rest in Christ. And I I just give him the glory for his grace and his faithfulness. It's not my faithfulness that saves me, it's his faithfulness.

Jeff Laird

I would say I come at it from a similar perspective, sort of with two branches. I'm I'm the type who understands that what I feel and what I like does not define what's true. So I can say that there are some things doctrinally that I believe are true that don't give me the warm and fuzzies. It's maybe not my preference, but that's true. In the case of perseverance of the Saints, it does have that. It is a sort of a warm and fuzzy. I appreciate that that it provides that sense of of security and safety and knowledge. I was talking about Paul in Roman 7 saying he's struggling with I'm back and forth and back and forth and what do I do and just relying on the idea that Christ has got you. He's the one who's maintaining it. It's not about you. You know, you don't have to be the one to do that.

Jeff Laird

And then the other side of it is the sort of the logical idea that to me, perseverance of the Saints is sort of like a a very tall water tower or clock tower in a city. It's like this landmark that's visible from just about everywhere. And so many of the doctrines that we talk about in Christianity, in some way, point to look to, reflect on, the idea of eternal security one way or the other. So it's this really nice capstone, as you said, sort of a piece of theology that from just about everywhere you can see and you can go back to in everything that you talk about. So to me that makes it valuable beyond just being something that is happy to think about.

Shea Houdmann

Jeff, Kevin, thank you. Thank you for joining me for this episode and this whole series. As we said at the very beginning this episode on perseverance of the Saints is the last of the five points, and it's actually episode 6, and we're going to do Episode 7 where we kind of discuss the kind of the practical implications of Calvinism. So OK, here are the five points which we agree with to varying degrees and in various points. What does it all mean? How does this actually impact how we live, how we evangelize, how we view God and our responsibility, all those things. Because that's we're not just here to answer theological questions. We're going to see where the rubber hits the road. Where this actually impacts us on a day-to-day life of following Christ. So that will be episode 7. So please come back and stay tuned for that as well. So again, Jeff, Kevin, thank you for joining me today. This has been the Got Questions podcast on what is the perseverance of the Saints, the fifth point of the five points of Calvinism. Got questions? The Bible has answers, and we'll help you find them.