

# Why Do We Believe *That?*

## Class 16 – TULIP

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### Westminster Confession of Faith

#### **Article 17 – Of the Perseverance of the Saints**

1. 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.
2. This perseverance of the saints depends, not 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 which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.
3. Nevertheless they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their perseverance, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein: whereby 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.

#### **Article 18 – Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation**

1. Although hypocrites, and other unregenerate men, may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions: of being in the favor of God and estate of salvation; which hope of theirs shall perish: yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in a state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God: which hope shall never make them ashamed.
2. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith, founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God; which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.
3. This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith but that a true believer may wait long and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it: yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto. And therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure; that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance: so far is it from inclining men to looseness.

4. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it; by falling into some special sin, which woundeth the conscience, and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation; by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light: yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may in due time be revived, and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.

Daniel Hyde, "The Preservation and Perseverance of the Saints," in *A Faith Worth Defending: The Synod of Dort's Enduring Heritage*

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**p.107-108**

Peter speaks of the certainty of the salvation of God when saying our "inheritance" is being "reserved" by the power of God (1 Peter 1:4-5). Peter uses the verb "reserved" in the perfect passive tense. The perfect tense is used less frequently than the other tenses in the New Testament; when it is, there's a reason. Peter is signifying that our inheritance was accomplished in the past, and the results of that past action continue into the present. The New Testament authors use the same verb to speak of something that is "kept" until a definite time in the future (John 2:10; 12:7; 2 Peter 2:4, 9; 3:7; Jude 6). The certainty of the saints' salvation is also confirmed by the adjectives Peter uses to describe it: "incorruptible," meaning it is imperishable and immortal; "undefiled," meaning it is pure; and "fadeth not away" or "unfading," meaning it does not diminish over time.

The salvation is certain along with those who participate in it—the saved "who are kept by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:5).<sup>30</sup> Peter uses a present participial verb "kept," but it's in the passive voice, meaning, God is the one active in guarding, while believers are the recipients of this action. Think of a jar of peanut butter. The peanut butter is in the jar. The lid is opened and closed by your action. The peanut butter is passive. Why is there a lid? To preserve the peanut butter inside from the air outside that causes it to go bad. This verb "kept" is both powerful and personal: it's used for a guard inside a city's walls whose job is not to let people out (2 Cor. 11:32) and for the law that kept us like captives (Gal. 3:23). The law kept us in its custody and condemned us. In the context of 1 Peter 1, though, for those who have been born again, God is now powerfully guarding us under His custody. We're under new ownership. We're no longer condemned. When the last day comes, our rightful owner Jesus will take full possession of us. Of course all illustrations break down. While God is preserving us, we're not passive like peanut butter. God is actively working out His preserving work by activating us to persevere. God's power is guarding us "through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5).