

# Testamentum Imperium

An International Theological Journal

www.PreciousHeart.net/ti

Volume 1 – 2005-2007

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## Kept By the Power of God: The Lord as Guardian of Salvation

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While it is important and profitable to support the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints with Scriptural passages that specifically teach it, and to properly interpret passages that seem to oppose it, one must also consider another line of evidence. This line of evidence comes from a different perspective. If it is God himself who causes the believer to persevere to the end and be saved, the doctrine of perseverance must be related to the doctrine of God, and the immutability of his decree. When the focus is placed on God's work, not that of the believer, the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints will be seen to be on firm ground.

The sovereign and immutable decree of God proceeds from his immutable and simple nature. The relation of God's nature to the perseverance of the saints is defined in the standard Reformed creeds, and is taught in Scripture. The Lord indeed is the Guardian of salvation.

### *God as Guardian of Salvation in Reformed Creeds*

The two most carefully constructed creeds to come out of the Reformed branch of the Protestant Reformation are the Canons of the Synod of Dort (1619) and the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms (1647-1648). Both of these documents support the Reformed system of doctrine as being taught by Scripture. And both of them relate the perseverance of the saints to the attributes of God, especially his omnipotence and immutability. They make it clear that we persevere in faith, not because of our own merit or strength, but because of God, who keeps us as our Guardian of salvation.

### **The Canons of the Synod of Dort**

Before expanding on its statements concerning perseverance in the fifth major section of its Canons, the Synod of Dort in the first section introduced the subject with a reference to the attributes of God from which this doctrine springs:

And as God himself is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient, and omnipotent, so the election made by him can neither be interrupted nor changed, recalled nor annulled; neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number diminished.<sup>1</sup>

Note that the Synod based the certainty of perseverance on the nature of God, as "wise, unchangeable, omniscient, and omnipotent." It should be noted also, that the Synod considered the "elect" of this paragraph to be the same people who, during their lives, are initially

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<sup>1</sup> Canons of the Synod of Dort, Head 1, Art. 11. Printed in *The Creeds of Christendom*, ed. by Philip Schaff, rev. by David S. Schaff (1931; reprinted, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 3:583.

regenerated, converted, and justified.<sup>2</sup> Those are the same people persevere, and whose number cannot be “diminished.”

Later, in that same first section the Canons clearly reject the possibility that one of God’s elect can fall away from that state and come to condemnation. Again, it is because of the immutability of God that the Synod rejected the idea

That not every election unto salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the elect, any decree of God notwithstanding, can yet perish and do indeed perish. By which gross error they make God to be changeable, and destroy the comfort which the godly obtain out of the firmness of their election, and contradict the Holy Scripture.<sup>3</sup>

The major discussion of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is reserved for the fifth section of the Canons of Dort. Several places in that section the Canons link our perseverance to God’s attributes:

By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and the temptations of sin and of the world, those who are converted could not persevere in a state of grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end.<sup>4</sup>

Here our perseverance is not the result of our own spiritual strength, but is the product of God’s faithfulness, grace, mercy, and power.

Even when Christians fall into “enormous sins,” God’s unchangeable decree comes to the rescue:

But God, who is rich in mercy, according to his unchangeable purpose of election, does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from his own people, even in their melancholy falls; nor suffer them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption and forfeit the state of justification, or to commit the sin unto death; nor does he permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.<sup>5</sup>

Article 8 adds the comment that

It is not in consequence of their own merits or strength, but of God’s free mercy, that they do not totally fall from faith and grace, . . . with respect to God, it is utterly impossible, since his counsel can not be changed, nor his promise fail, neither can the call according to his purpose be revoked, nor the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ be rendered ineffectual, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit be frustrated or obliterated.<sup>6</sup>

This doctrine affords great praise to God, none to the believer. It is his strength and faithfulness that preserve the Christian faithful to the end. That is the point in the final statement of the Canons:

The spouse of Christ hath always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it [this doctrine of perseverance], as an inestimable treasure; and God, against whom neither counsel nor strength can prevail, will dispose her to continue this conduct to the end. Now to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be honor and glory forever. Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Canons of Dort, Head 1, Art. 6 (Schaff, *Creeds* 3:582).

<sup>3</sup> Canons of Dort, Rejection 6 (in Latin in Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:575; translated into English in *Reformed Confessions Harmonized*, ed. by Joel R. Beeke and Sinclair B. Ferguson (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 118-120.

<sup>4</sup> Canons of Dort, Head 5, Art. 3 (Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:593).

<sup>5</sup> Canons of Dort, Head 5, Art. 6 (Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:593).

<sup>6</sup> Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:594.

<sup>7</sup> Canons of Dort, Head 5, Art. 15 (Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:595).

## **The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms**

While the Westminster Standards contain a more complete system of theology than do the more specialized Canons of Dort, they still have much to say about this particular doctrine.

The Westminster Confession of Faith in Article 17, Paragraph 1, directly defines and asserts the truth of the doctrine of perseverance.<sup>8</sup> However, in Paragraph 2 the Confession details the reasons for this perseverance:

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 the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.

This paragraph specifically denies that perseverance is based on the will of the Christian, but instead bases it upon these truths concerning God himself:

- God's decree of election is immutable (unchangeable).
- The love of God the Father is unchangeable.
- The merit and intercession of Jesus Christ are effectual to their desired end.
- The Holy Spirit's abiding in the believer (along with the "seed of God" within them) is permanent.
- The covenant of grace (made between the Father and the Son) demands the final salvation of all the ones for whom Jesus died.

In the Bible portions referenced in the Confession these points are confirmed. The next major section of this paper will discuss those portions.

In addition to the statement in the Confession, the same truth is expressed in even clearer terms in the Larger Catechism:

Q. 79: May not true believers, by reason of their imperfections, and the many temptations and sins they are overtaken with, fall away from the state of grace? Ans.: True believers, by reason of the unchangeable love of God, and his decree and covenant to give them perseverance, their inseparable union with Christ, his continual intercession for them, and the Spirit and seed of God abiding in them, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

As the parallel section in the Confession, this Catechism answer clearly places the certainty of the perseverance of the individual Christian in the attributes and faithfulness of God. This answer repeats most of the items in WCF 17:2, and adds two others: our "inseparable union with Christ," and God's "decree . . . to give them perseverance." It concludes with a reference to 1 Pet 1:5, that we "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

These references to the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Standards prove that the Reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is uniformly taught, and that the basis of that perseverance is the unchanging plan and purpose of God, brought about by his almighty wisdom and power.

## ***God as the Guardian of Salvation in Scripture***

The Reformed creeds uniformly base their statements on the doctrines of Scripture. Both creeds cited in the previous section intersperse their own words with quotations lifted directly

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<sup>8</sup> It is asserted as such also in the WLC 79 and in the WSC 36.

from the Bible. In addition, the Westminster Standards, as required by the Parliament of England at the time, supplied Scripture proofs along with their own formulations.

### Explicit Scriptural statements

It was not difficult to find such passages from the Bible. Scripture frequently speaks of God's preserving his elect and bringing them to everlasting glory. Here are a few examples:

- Phil 1:6, "he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus"
- 2 Tim 1:12, "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day"
- 1 Pet 1:5, 9, "who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. . . . for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls"
- Jude 24, "to him who is able to keep you from falling"

Perhaps one of the clearest passages showing the divine side of perseverance is Rom 8:29-30:

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

This passage is constructed in such a way that exactly the same people are the objects of God's work throughout the entire process, from their first election to their final glorification. The Greek structure of this passage follows the pattern, "the ones whom he (foreknew and predestined, called, and justified) . . . these ones he also (called, justified, and glorified)."<sup>9</sup> Like an express train that does not stop during its trip to load or unload passengers, so God's saving work begins with foreknowledge and predestination (before the world was created), and does not allow for anyone to "leave the train" until it reaches its destination with ultimate glorification (after this age is over). If anyone experiences in this life God's works of "calling" and "justification," then, according to this passage, that person was also predestined and will be glorified. There are no exceptions. And why is there this perfect consistency? The answer lies in the fact that God himself is the one who does this work. This truth is demonstrated by the verbs in the passage—"he foreknew, he predestined, he called, he justified, he glorified." These verbs are third person singular in form, and the implied subject is God himself. This is confirmed by verses 32-33,<sup>10</sup> which explicitly name "God" as the one who "calls" and who "justifies," and thus as the implied subject of the other verbs.

### The work of the Trinity

As noted in WCF 17:2, all three members of the Trinity are active in the work of preserving the believer in the faith.

The Father sets us free and places his unchangeable love on us.

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<sup>9</sup> Greek of Rom 8:29-30, o [ti ou]j proe,gnw( kai. prow,risen summo,rfouj th/j eivko,noj tou/ ui`ou/ auvtou/( eivj to. ei=nai auvtou.n prwto,tokon evn polloi/j avdelfoi/j\ ou]j de. prow,risen( tou,touj kai. evka,lesen\ kai. ou]j evka,lesen( tou,touj kai. evdikai,wsen\ ou]j de. evdikai,wsen( tou,touj kai. evdo,xasen

<sup>10</sup> "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies."

- Jer 31:3, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.”
- 2 Tim 2:19, “Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are his’”

The Son paid for us to save us, and now prays for us.

- Cf. Luke 22:32 (Jesus prays for Peter).
- John 10:28, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”
- John 17:24, “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am.”
- Rom 8:33-39, (nothing able to separate us from God’s love in Christ, because Christ died for us).
- Heb 7:25, “Therefore he is able to save completely (ASV, “to the uttermost”) those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”

The Holy Spirit abides in us.

- John 14:16-17, “the Father . . . will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. . . . he lives with you and will be in you” (“and will be in you” has UBS<sup>4</sup> {C} rating; many MSS read, “and is in you”).
- 1 John 2:27, “As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.”
- 1 John 3:9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.

### **The unchangeability of God’s nature and purposes**

The doctrine of God’s superintending the perseverance of the saints can be derived from Scripture in several ways. Besides directly stating the doctrine, the Bible teaches other truths about God that would require the preservation of the saints as a corollary. One of these is the unchangeability of God’s nature and purposes, which will be treated in this section, and the other is the nature of the covenant of redemption, which will be treated in the next section.

The Bible frequently links the certainty of the final salvation of the elect to the unchangeability of God and his steadfast purpose, which no creaturely act, even our own sins, can overcome.

In his massive work *The Doctrine of the Saints’ Perseverance Explained and Confirmed*, the Puritan theologian John Owen devotes two entire chapters to this theme.<sup>11</sup> He discusses several passages from Scripture that describe God’s faithfulness to his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in spite of the sin and apostasy of their descendants, the people of Israel. These same passages include his faithfulness to believers in this dispensation. Here are a few of these passages:

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<sup>11</sup> This work has been published as Volume 11 of *The Works of John Owen* (1850-1853; reprinted, London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965). The two chapters are Chapter 2, “The Perseverance of the Saints Argued from the Immutability of the Divine Nature” (pp. 120-139), and Chapter 3, “The Immutability of the Purposes of God” (pp. 140-204).

- Ps 33:9-11, “For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.”
- Isa 14:24-27, “The LORD Almighty has sworn, ‘Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand. I will crush the Assyrian in my land; on my mountains I will trample him down. His yoke will be taken from my people, and his burden removed from their shoulders.’ This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?”
- Isa 40:27-31, “Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God’? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”
- Isa 44:1-8, “But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. This is what the LORD says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. One will say, ‘I belong to the LORD’; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, ‘The LORD’s,’ and will take the name Israel. “This is what the LORD says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come—yes, let him foretell what will come. Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me?”
- Isa 46:9-11, “Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that will I do.”
- Mal 3:6, “I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.”
- Acts 15:17-18, “‘that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things’ that have been known for ages.”
- Rom 11:29, “for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.”
- Rom 11:33-36, “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ‘Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God,

that God should repay him?’ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”

- 1 Cor 2:7-11, “No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”— but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”
- Eph 1:11, “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.”
- Jas 1:17-18, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.”

To appreciate the force of Owen’s argument, it is not sufficient only to read these passages. The point is that each of these passages occurs in a similar context. The context is that God’s people, elected and called by him, will attain final salvation. This is done by God’s overriding sovereign grace to them, overcoming their own unbelief and sin. Whenever people reach the state of glory, after having persevered, these Scriptures indicate that it was God’s goodness and faithfulness, his consistency with his own nature, that brought this about. The perseverance of the saints is obtained not by the advanced spirituality of themselves, but only by the faithful sovereignty of God exercised in their behalf. That is the import of these and similar Scripture passages.

### **The unchangeability of the covenant of redemption**

The covenant of redemption is that theological term frequently applied to the agreement or arrangement made between God the Father and God the Son before the creation of the world, for the Son to obey his Father, to become the man Jesus Christ, to live in perfect righteousness, and to suffer in our place. For this obedience Jesus Christ would receive an eternal kingdom, and a people to be his own (the elect). The fact that such an arrangement existed can be demonstrated by various passages from the Bible:

1. The elect were chosen to salvation before the world was created.  
Eph 1:4, “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”
2. The elect were chosen to salvation in Christ.  
Eph 1:4-11, “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.”



3. Christ's death for the salvation of the elect thus was determined before the foundation of the world, which is also stated in Scripture.

1 Pet 1:19-20, "but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen (Greek, "who was foreknown," with the idea of choice) before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake."

Rev 13:8, "All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world."<sup>12</sup>

Also, this conclusion must follow from a proper understanding of God's omniscience and his unchangeableness.

4. Christ deliberately undertook his humiliation, obedience, sufferings, and sacrifice in response to his Father's will.

John 10:11-18, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

John 17:4, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do."

John 17:8, "For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me."

John 17:18, As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

John 17:23-24, "I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."

5. This submission involved a difficult decision for his human nature.

Luke 12:50, "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!"

John 12:27, "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour."

Luke 22:41-44, "He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, 'Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.' An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."

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<sup>12</sup> The Greek text most easily reads "slain from the creation," as in KJV, NIV, NASB margin; not "written from the creation," as in ASV, RSV, NASB, NIV margin.



6. In obeying this command of the Father, Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the suffering of the Messiah.

Isa 53 contains many verses about the suffering Messiah (often quoted in the NT).

Zech 12:10, “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.”

Rev 1:7, “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.”

7. As the Messiah was to receive an eternal kingdom, so Jesus expected to receive it.

Matt 7:21-23, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

Matt 25:31-32, “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”

Luke 22:29-30, “And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

8. As a part of this kingdom, Jesus Christ would receive as his own an elect seed, to be saved and glorified, and to be with him forever.

Isa 53:10-11, “Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.”

John 17:2, “For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.”

John 17:9, “I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.”

John 17:24, “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.”

Eph 5:25-27, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”

If this covenant of redemption actually represents the work of Christ as related to his Father (and the above Scriptures indicate that it does), then it has implications for the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. If the Father gave the elect to the Son in reward for his obedience to the Father, then those elect persons are Christ’s by right of redemption, and may not be taken from him—not by their own wills nor those of others. If God the Father himself is assuring

Christ that these people for whom he died will be Christ's forever in his eternal kingdom, then God will see to it that Christ will receive them.

The covenant of redemption ties all the "points of Calvinism" or "doctrines of grace" together. It is for this reason that the Westminster Confession stated that all these saving graces (regeneration, effectual calling, faith, repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, glorification) are never alone, but always come to the elect in their entirety:

"Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love."<sup>13</sup>

This same conclusion was stated again by the Confession, in a passage quoted earlier, "This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon . . . the nature of the covenant of grace" (WCF 17:2).

Several Scriptural passages that speak of the covenant of redemption, or the covenant of grace (the resulting covenant between God and the sinner, promising life on the condition of faith in Jesus Christ), likewise declare that God himself will oversee the elect during all their lives, and will keep them in perseverance, and will bring them to glory:

- Jer 32:40, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them [the new covenant]: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me."
- Heb 9:12-15, ". . . having obtained eternal redemption . . . How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, . . . cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance"
- Heb 10:14, "by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy"
- Heb 13:20-21, "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant . . . equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ"

Thus it is clear that God is the Guardian of our salvation, and that we are kept safe in that salvation by God himself.

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<sup>13</sup> WCF 11:2.