

Preservation of the Saints

Elder Allen Daniels

“And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4:18).

During my 42 years as an ordained minister, I have studied the Scriptures that relate to the subject of “Preservation of the Saints”. I have read many articles and commentaries about it, and heard many sermons preached about it; therefore, I am sure that much of what I write here will have been said or written before; nevertheless, I am thankful for the opportunity to express my views.

A very similar text to 2 Timothy 4:18 is found in Psalms 121:4-8: “Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”

Webster's 1828 Dictionary gives the following definition for preserve: *“To keep or save from injury or destruction; to defend from evil.”*

Strong's Concordance gives the following definition for preserve: *“to guard; to protect, attend to; to save, i.e. deliver.”*

This doctrine teaches that all of God's elect shall be kept by the power of God and shall be eternally saved; though they may walk in darkness and disobedience here in this time world, thereby, losing the joy of their salvation in their timely existence, yet they can never be eternally lost. This principle is also sometimes referred to as “eternal security” or “once saved always saved.” If this doctrine is not the truth of Scripture, then the eternal covenant is false and the work of Jesus Christ in redemption and justification is of non-effect.

I can think of no other doctrine that brings more comfort and blessed assurance to God's born again saints than believing that they are embraced in the eternal covenant and that Christ Jesus redeemed them from all their sins (past, present, and future); yet, I can think of nothing that could be more discouraging or despairing to one of the Lord's little children than to believe that their eternal salvation could be lost. However, if our obedience places us in Christ, then our disobedience can remove us from that position. Indeed, there is a large group in Christendom that believes this very thing, that is, a person is not actually eternally saved here on earth, but that they only have eternal life in prospect.

But what do the Scriptures teach concerning this doctrine of *“Preservation of the Saints?”* The Scriptural proofs are many to which time and space will not permit their use in this article, but I will only use two proof texts and leave the rest to another time.

Please consider the following texts and my brief comments: “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called” (Jude 1).

“...to them that are sanctified by God the Father”: I believe this statement to be teaching the act of eternal election. The word “*sanctified*” in this text is in the past tense and means, set apart for a holy or sacred purpose. This is in harmony with Ephesians chapter one where the Apostle Paul states that the elect of God were chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, and predestinated unto the adoption of children, and that they should be holy and without blame before him in love. The word “*holy*” in this passage of Scripture comes from the same Greek root {*hagos*} as sanctify and saint. The word means, “*set apart for a sacred use (physically, pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially, consecrated).*” Paul verifies this definition by stating that these “saints” have been made accepted in the beloved, in whom (Jesus Christ) they have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

“...and preserved in Jesus Christ”; those who are sanctified, or set apart by God the Father in election, in Christ Jesus, are “*preserved*” (*guarded and protected: delivered from destruction by the power of God*). This “*preservation*” is before they are “*called*” (*effectually called: regenerated, born again*); therefore, there is not the slightest possibility that any of those who were “sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ” will not be born of the Holy Spirit.

Now in closing please consider with me the words of our Lord Jesus: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one” (John 10:27-30).

Notice the language, “*My sheep*”: when did they become “*His sheep*”? They were his sheep before they heard his life giving voice. Jesus said, “*I know them, and they follow me*”; this means that all who were chosen in Him by God the Father shall follow Him in regeneration. “*I give unto them eternal life,*” He did not say, I give unto them temporary life, or I give unto them eternal life in prospect, but “eternal life.” Eternal means lasting for all time without beginning or end. The Greek word for eternal here is “*aionios*” and means, perpetual, forever, everlasting. This “eternal life” is a gift from God and Jesus said those who have it “*shall never perish.*” These words of Jesus, “*they shall never perish,*” are in complete agreement with those of Jude: they are “*preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.*” Neither shall any man pluck them out of Jesus’ hand because they were given to him by God the Father in the eternal covenant before the foundation of the world and there is none greater than the Almighty Creator God; therefore, no man is able to pluck them out of His hand.

Let us be forever thankful for the belief in this most excellent doctrine of the “Preservation of the Saints.”