

Canons of Dort–5th Head: 1-3 – Christians Need to Be Preserved

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: After the pains of pregnancy and delivery, does a mother put her child in his crib and say: “You’re on your own; I need to get some rest?” That child will only survive for a short time without assistance. How much more wouldn’t your heavenly Father care for you after you are born again? He knows after your rebirth **you could not survive a moment without his constant help** – his constant preservation. What a comforting doctrine this is! You will hear about this today.

First, what is preservation? **Preservation is the continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in a believer such that the work of grace that was begun in the heart at regeneration is continued and brought to full completion in his glorification.**

(You will notice that often the “p” in TULIP is referred to as perseverance, but it is better to use the term preservation, as it puts the focus on the work of God to preserve us! **Man only perseveres because God is preserving him.**)

Our headings are:

Believers Sin after Conversion

Believers Seek Christ for Protection from Sins

Believers Strengthened by Christ to Fight Sins

Our goals are: **That seeing your need to be preserved, and seeing God’s gift of preservation, you will receive the Lord’s preservation with joy and respond in proper worship and service to his Divine Majesty.**

Believers Sin after Conversion

Article 1: The Regenerate Not Entirely Free from Sin -Those people whom God calls into fellowship with God’s Son Jesus Christ our Lord according to the divine purpose and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, God also wholly sets free from the dominion and slavery of sin, **though not wholly from the flesh and body of sin as long as they are in this life.**

1. Even though you are miraculously and wondrously saved by God, sin remains in you and you sin in thoughts, words, and deeds.

You never stop sinning, so **you need help from God to overcome sin.** Hear what Apostles Paul and John said to the church.

Romans 7: 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. **23** But I **see another law in my members**, warring against the law of my mind, and **bringing me into captivity to the law of sin** which is in my members.

1John 1:8 **If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves**, and the truth is not in us.

Apostle James said we all stumble. **This is why you pray “lead us not into temptation” and “forgive us our debts.”** **You know your proclivity to sin and your consequent need for forgiveness.**

2. Knowing your weakness even after conversion, God promised to preserve you.

John 6:39 **“This is the will of the Father** who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.

Because God saved you, he will complete that work. He will always complete what he started. **He is willing and able to do so.** You will fail; he will not!

3. Arminian brothers believe persevering is not a fruit of election (or a gift of God), but perseverance is a condition God placed on man – something man must do by himself.

They believe you must fix the sin that remains in your life. But is this what you see in this text?

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, **but delivered Him up for us all**, how shall He not **with Him also freely give us all things**? **33** Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. **34** Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. **35** **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Preserving is the work of God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. After all, who can resist and triumph over the world, the flesh, and the Devil by himself? Can man by himself resist temptations? Certainly not! Your enemies are too powerful! **Man needs God to remain in the faith!**

Believers Seek Christ for protection from Sins

Article 2: The Believer's Reaction to Sins of Weakness - Hence daily sins of weakness arise, and blemishes cling to even the best works of saints, giving them continual cause to **humble themselves** before God, to **flee for refuge** to Christ crucified, to **put the flesh to death** more and more by the Spirit of supplication and by **holy exercises of godliness**, and to strain toward the goal of perfection, until they are freed from this body of death and reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

1. While sin daily clings to you, and while you are unable by yourself to destroy sin, you make use of the means God has provided to be preserved.

2. What are those means?

a. Be humble before your Father in heaven. When you think too much of yourself and your desires, you sin. But whatever goes down (humility) will come up (growth). The arrogant are cut down.

James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

b. Daily flee to God for protection, and solace on the basis of Christ's work. Only in Jesus are you safe! Quicksand of wickedness will kill you! Flee to his church, to this Word and his Sacraments.

Psalms 40:2 He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps.

c. Put to death your sins with the help of God's Holy Spirit. Practice obedience, replacing sin with service. Instead of wasting time on the internet, write an encouraging e-mail to a visitor. Say a prayer for the persecuted or the poor. Write a missionary. This is how to kill lusts!

In doing these things, you acknowledge you do not have the wherewithal to fix the problem of the remnants of sin in you.

3. Our Arminian friends believe, while God does give these gifts to his children, they can stop the salvation process by refusing to use these gifts.

In other words, though they were regenerated by God (and given eternal life), if they refuse to use these gifts to persevere, they could lose that eternal life. **They believe there is no salvation without human intervention, so God is 'stuck without human cooperation.'** This is robbing God of his honor. Further, how can eternal life stop being eternal life? **If an infant has fallen out of a window, would he be safe if he were holding on to his father or if his father were holding on to him?** The infant's hand is not strong to hold on for his life! He will fall. So God holds on to our souls. **We might do foolishly, but he keeps us!**

Believers Strengthened by Christ to fight sins

Article 3: God's Preservation of the Converted - Because of these remnants of sin dwelling in them and also because of the temptations of the world and Satan, those who have been converted could not remain standing in this grace if left to their own resources. But God is faithful, mercifully strengthening them in the grace once conferred on them and powerfully preserving them in it to the end.

1. The Devil, the world, and your flesh hate you, so you need to be strengthened to fight them.

John 15:18 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19

"If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, **therefore the world hates you.**

Revelation 12:9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the **Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world**; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, **who accused them** before our God **day and night**, has been cast down.

You have a really dangerous enemy. Yes, it is true that sometimes you might not feel as if the world hates you, but you must not live on the basis of feelings; **you have to live on the basis of revealed truth.**

Indeed, **the pretense of the world is a trap the Devil constantly uses to fool people into thinking all is well with their soul. No wise one embraces the one who hates him!**

2. More, you have to be strengthened because this is a war with many battles throughout your life.

1Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about **like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.** **9 Resist him**, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

The enemy is not some kind of weak and sickly enemy you can ignore or play games with!

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

A transformation does not take place with gentle work! This is **revolutionary** work.

Philippians 3:12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; **but I press on**, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

You are to apply force...press on...

3. The Lord gave the assurance of his preservation and taught this in the parable of the Good Shepherd.

John 10:28 "And I give them **eternal life**, and they shall never perish; **neither shall any-one snatch them out of My hand.** **29** "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; **and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.**

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you **will complete it until the day** of Jesus Christ;

Psalms 138:7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, **You will revive me**; You will stretch out Your hand Against the wrath of my enemies, And Your right hand will save me. **8** The LORD will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever...

4 The Lord prays for your preservation from sins, and when he prays, he gets answers!

Luke 22:31 And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. **32** **"But I have prayed for you**, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

5. Arminians put man at the center of this struggle, but the Bible clearly puts God at the center.

Knowing yourself and your weaknesses, choose God to be at the center of your life!

Conclusion:

The believer continues to sin after he is saved. Instead of trying to fight off sin by himself, **he must run to God in humility and plead for help.** Though he will still sin, God will **work through his Word and Spirit to reinforce him** with strength so he perseveres and his salvation is preserved.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Stand in awe of God and in humility when you see his work from the beginning to the end of your salvation. He saved you and keeps you in the hollow of his hand. Praise his!

2. When you sin and become ashamed, run to the one who loved you for help to overcome sin. Use the gifts – the means – he has provided - so you can persevere and be preserved. Pray for forgiveness. Run to the church for the Word and Sacraments to strengthen your faith. You must do this! You need this!

3. Teach of God's preservation to your children so they don't become overburdened with their sin. Teach them to cast their cares on the Lord! Jesus paid it all.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, know God preserves his people but punishes those who are not his in the eternal fires of hell. May this urge you to run to him and plead for mercy, on account of Christ, so that you can be saved from eternal punishment.