

Of the Perseverance of the Saints.

by John Gill

The doctrine of the saints' final perseverance teaches that those who are truly regenerated, effectually called, and really converted shall persevere in grace to the end and shall be eternally saved.

Scripture: Job 17:9, Psalm 94:14, Psalm 125:1

Topics: "Assurance of Salvation", "Perseverance of the Saints"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, asserting that those who are truly regenerated and called by God will ultimately persevere in grace and be saved eternally. He supports this doctrine with numerous scriptural references, illustrating that God's promises, His immutable nature, and the work of Christ ensure that believers will not fall away. Gill explains that the faithful are kept by God's power and that their salvation is secure through the covenant established by Christ. He addresses potential objections to this doctrine, clarifying that true believers cannot ultimately fall away, as their salvation is rooted in God's unchanging love and faithfulness.

Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 6--Chapter 15

OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

The doctrine of the saints' final perseverance in grace to glory is next to be considered; which is, that those who are truly regenerated, effectually called, and really converted, and internally sanctified by the Spirit and grace of God, shall persevere in grace to the end, and shall be everlastingly saved; or shall never finally and totally fall, so as to perish everlastingly. This truth may be confirmed, 1. From various passages of scripture, which clearly hold it forth and assert it; it is written as with a sunbeam in the sacred writings; to give the whole pass of the proof of it, which they will admit, would be to transcribe great part of the Bible.

I shall only therefore select some passages, both out of the Old and New Testament, which fully express it. And shall begin, 1a. First, with Job 17:9. "The righteous also shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger". By the righteous man is meant one that is made truly righteous, by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and which he receives by faith; in consequence

of which he lives soberly and righteously: and by his way is meant, Christ "the way"; in whom he walks as he has received him, as the Lord his Righteousness.

And it is promised, he "shall hold on" in this his way; which is opposed to going back, turning aside, and standing still; if he went back, or apostatized, or turned either to the right hand or the left, or was at a full stop, he could not be said to go on; and if he goes on he must persevere; and though he meets with discouragement in the way, from sin, and Satan, and the world, yet he goes on; and though he may slip, and slide, and stumble, and even fall; yet as the traveler, when this is his case, gets up again and pursues his journey; so the believer rises again in the strength of Christ, in whom he walks, and in the exercise of faith and repentance; and still goes on his way, rejoicing in Christ his righteousness and strength; and to which his going on is owing, and not to his own conduct, power, and strength.

As "hands" are an emblem of action, by "clean hands" are meant, a holy, upright walk and conversation, arising from an inward principle of grace in the heart; as appears by comparing Psalm 15:1, 2 with Psalm 24:3, 4 and such a man who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, though he may have but little strength, yet he has some, which is here supposed; and as he wants more, to resist temptations, oppose corruption, exercise grace, and perform duty, he shall have more, be stronger and stronger, as here promised; God will, and does, "give power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength, and renews their strength, so that they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint", and consequently persevere to the end; yea, the "way" of the Lord itself is "strength" unto them; as they walk in it, they become stronger and stronger, and go "from strength to strength", till they appear before God in Zion above (Isa. 40:29, 31; Prov. 10:29; Ps. 84:5-7).

Now if the righteous shall hold on his way, he must persevere; and if the good man shall be stronger and stronger, he must endure to the end, and be saved; or otherwise, he would become weaker and weaker, until he had no strength at all; and then how would this promise be fulfilled? 1b. Secondly, another passage of scripture, proving the saints final perseverance, is in Psalm 94:14. "For the Lord will not cast off his people", &c. the Lord's people are his special and peculiar people, whom he has loved, chosen, redeemed, and called, his "foreknown people"; these he never casts off, casts out, nor casts away (Rom. 11:2), though he may seem to do so; and they may think he has, when he does not immediately arise for their help in distress; and when he withdraws his presence, or afflicts them, or suffers them to be afflicted by others, which seems to be their case in this Psalm; and for their comfort these words are said; (see Ps. 94:5, 6, 12, 13; 44:9, 23, 24; 88:14) yet, in reality, God does not cast off, at least for ever, as unbelief sometimes suggests; he never casts them off, nor casts them out from being in his sight; for they are engraven on the palms of his hands; nor from being on his heart, for they are set as a seal there; nor from a place in his house, for being sons they always abide there; and whoever casts them off, or casts out their names as evil, he never will; so far from it, that he takes the utmost delight and complacency in them; grants them nearness to himself, and expresses the strongest affection for them, and takes the greatest care of them, even as the apple of his eye: and these are his "inheritance", which he will never "forsake", though he may seem to forsake them for a little while, yet he never does, finally and totally; he has promised he will not, and he is faithful who has promised; he never forsakes their persons, neither in youth nor in old age; nor the work of his hands on them, but fulfils the good pleasure of his goodness in them, and the work of faith with power; and for this reason he will not forsake them, because they are his inheritance, which he has chosen, his jewels, and his peculiar treasure; and therefore will never lose them: if, therefore, he will not cast off his people for ever, nor utterly forsake them, then they shall persevere to the end, and be saved, and not everlastingly perish. 1c.

Thirdly, this doctrine may be concluded from Psalm 125:1, 2 the persons described are such who "trust in the Lord", and not in the creature, nor in creature services; that trust in him at all times, and for all things; for temporal and spiritual blessings; for grace and glory: these are "like mount Zion", for many things, but especially for its immovableness; for those, like that, cannot be removed; not from the love of God, in which they are rooted and grounded; nor from the covenant of grace, which is as immovable as hills and mountains, yea, more so; they may be removed, but that cannot be removed; nor the Lord's covenant people out of it; nor out of the hands of Christ, out of whose hands none can pluck; nor off of him, the foundation, on which they are laid, which is a sure and everlasting one; nor out of a state of grace, in which they stand; neither of sanctification, which is connected with life everlasting; nor of justification, for those who have passed from death to life, shall never enter into condemnation.

These, like mount Zion, abide for ever; they abide on the heart of God, in the hands of Christ, on him the sure foundation laid in Zion; in the house of God, and in the family of his people. And what makes their safety and security appear still the greater, is, that as Jerusalem was encompassed with mountains, which were a natural and strong fortification to it; "so the Lord is round about his people, even for ever"; he surrounds them with his love, encompasses them with his favors, as with a shield, guards them by his special providence, and watches over them night and day, lest any hurt them; and keeps them by his power as in a garrison, through faith unto salvation.

And if all these things are true of them, as they most certainly are, then they shall finally persevere in grace, and be eternally saved. 1d. Fourthly, this truth will receive further proof from Jeremiah 32:40. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them", &c. In which words are more proofs than one of the saints final perseverance. This may be concluded, 1d1. From the perpetuity of the covenant made with them; which is not a covenant of works, promising life on doing; then their perseverance would be precarious; but of grace, sovereign and free; and so is a better covenant, and established on better promises, which are absolute and unconditional, not depending on anything to be performed by them; but which runs thus, "I will", and "they shall"; a covenant "ordered in all things", not one thing wanting in it, conducive to the welfare and happiness of the saints; in all spiritual blessings, for time and eternity, in both grace and glory, which are eternally secured in it, and therefore said to be sure; its blessings are the sure mercies of David; its promises yea and amen, in Christ; and the whole is ratified and confirmed by the blood of Christ, and sure to all the spiritual seed, to all interested in it; a covenant not made with them as considered by themselves, but with Christ, as their head, and with them in him; and it is kept, and stands fast with him for evermore.

It is an everlasting covenant, flows from everlasting love, and founded on an everlasting purpose; consists of promises, which God, that cannot lie, made before the world began; and of grace, and blessings of grace, given in Christ so early, who was set up as the Mediator of it from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was; and the covenant ones, with all their grace, were put into his hands; all which show the certainty of their perseverance; for as God knew so early, when he took them into covenant, and provided for them, what they would be, even transgressors from the womb, and do as evil as they could; and yet this hindered not his taking them into covenant; then it may be depended upon, that none of these things shall ever throw them out of it, for it abides to everlasting; God that made it, has commanded it for ever; he will never break it; it shall never be antiquated and made void, by another covenant succeeding it; its blessings are irreversible, and its promises are always fulfilled; its grace is sufficient for the saints under all their temptations, trials, and exercises, to bear them up, and bear them through time to eternity: covenant interest always continues; he that is their covenant God, will be their God and guide even unto

death, and through it, to the world beyond the grave; and therefore they shall most certainly persevere, and be saved. 1d2.

This may be confirmed from the promise made in the covenant, that God will "not turn away from them to do them good!" he may withdraw his gracious presence, and return again, which shows that he does not turn away from them for ever; he never turns from his affections to them, which are unalterably fixed on them; nor from his kind purposes concerning them; for he is in one mind, and none can turn him: nor from his gracious promises to them; for he is not a man, that he should lie or repent; but what he has said, he will do, and not alter the thing that is gone out of his lips: nor from his gifts bestowed on them, which are without repentance, and which he never revokes, or calls in again: and he continues to do them good, both in things temporal and spiritual, as they stand in need of them; he has laid up much good for them in covenant, and in the hands of his Son; and he has bestowed much good upon them, given himself to them to be their portion and exceeding great reward; his Son, and all things with him; the Holy Spirit, and his graces; and continues the supplies of his grace, and carries on his good work in them, and makes all things to work together for their good. 1d3.

This is further strengthened by what follows; "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me"; not that they shall cease to sin; every sin being, in a sense, a departure from his precepts, and his judgments (Dan. 9:5). Nor that they shall not revolt and backslide from God, to which they are prone; and which backslidings are partial departures from him; but then these do not break the relation between God and them, as of father and children, of husband and wife: and besides, he heals their backslidings, and still loves them freely (Jer. 3:14; Hosea 14:4), but they do not wickedly depart from him; as David says, (Ps. 18:22) purposely, obstinately, and with an evil intent, and finally and totally.

They do not depart from the word of faith they have received; this, when it has once a place in their hearts, and becomes the engrafted word, and they have a true experience of, can never be utterly departed from, through the sleight of them who lie in wait to deceive: nor from the worship, ordinances, and people of God; having set their hand to the plough, they neither turn back nor look back, so as entirely to leave the good ways, and good people of God; and this the fear of God, put into their hearts, guards them against, and influences them to the contrary (Neh. 5:15).

Now if God will not turn away from his people, and will continue to do them good; if he so influences their hearts with his fear that they shall not depart from him, then they shall certainly persevere to the end, and be saved. 1e. Fifthly, another passage of scripture, which clearly expresses this truth, is in John 10:28. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand!" These words are spoken of the sheep of Christ, which he has a property in, whom the Father has given to him, and he has laid down his life for; whom he knows and calls by name, and they follow him in paths he directs them to: now to these he gives "eternal life", which he has in his hands, and a right to bestow; and which he does give to all his chosen, redeemed, and called ones; and if he gives them eternal life, they must live for ever, or it would not be an eternal life he gives them; they can never die the second death, or be hurt by it; but must persevere in a life of grace, till they come to a life of glory; and if Christ says, "they shall never perish", who dare say they may or shall perish? though they were lost in Adam, with the rest of mankind, yet they were preserved in Christ, and saved by him, who came to seek and to save that which was lost; and though in their nature state they seem ready to perish, and see themselves to be in such a condition, and therefore apply to Christ, and say, "Lord, save us, we perish!" yet they never shall really perish; for he is able and willing to save all that come to him; nor will he cast out any that are given him, as the sheep in the text are; and though when called by grace, they are liable to many slips and falls; to

spiritual decays and declensions; to loss of comfort and peace, and in that sense to perishings (1 Cor. 8:11), and to fears of perishing finally; and to faintings and sinkings of spirit; yet they shall never fail and sink under their burdens, and be lost; and though they die as other men, in which sense the righteous are said to perish (Eccl. 7:15; Isa. 57:1), yet they shall not perish eternally, as the wicked will, who will go into everlasting punishment, when these shall go into eternal life.

Besides, they are "in the hands" of Christ, and can never be plucked from thence; being put there by his Father, through his act of choosing them in him, as an instance of his love to them, and care of them, and for their security: and which is expressive of their being in his possession, at his dispose, under his guidance, care, and protection, and therefore must be safe; nor is it in the power of any man, either by force to pluck them, or by fraud to draw them out of Christ's hands; not the most violent persecutor, by the most cruel methods he can practice; nor the most cunning and artful false teacher, by all the wiles and sophistry he is master of; nor tiV, "any one", man or devil; Satan, with all his principalities and powers, can never force anyone from Christ; nor with all his stratagems, can draw anyone from him: and if they are in his hands, who is not only the mighty Saviour, and mighty Mediator, who has all power in heaven and in earth, but is the Lord God Almighty; are in his hands, which made the heavens and the earth; and which hold and uphold all things in being, and who is the Governor of the universe; then they shall never totally and finally fall away, or perish everlastingly. 1f.

Sixthly, the words of Christ in his prayer to his Father, are another proof of the preservation of his people by him; and of their final perseverance through that (John 17:12). "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled"; the persons spoken of, though primarily and more immediately the apostles of Christ, yet not they only; they were not the only persons given to Christ out of the world, and who stand opposed to the world, as these do (John 17:6, 9), nor are the words spoken of them as apostles, but as given to him by an act of special grace, as united to him, members of him, and believers in him; and as such, preserved by him: and if the preservation of them as such was secured to them, by being thus given to him; why may not the preservation of all other true believers in him be equally as sure and certain? nor is this said of their preservation from a temporal death; and that this might be fulfilled, he requested what he did (John 18:8, 9), but as the other things Christ speaks of, and prays for in this chapter, are all of a spiritual kind; such as sanctification, union, eternal glory; it is most reasonable to suppose, that this was of the same kind.

Besides, if preservation from temporal death is meant, the sense would be, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept" from a temporal death, "and none of them is lost" by a temporal death, "but the son of perdition", he is lost by a temporal death: which last was not true; Judas was not, at this time, lost in such sense; he had not yet betrayed Christ, and it was after his condemnation that he went and destroyed himself. To which may be added, that as Christ had kept those that were given him, he prays his Father would keep them in like manner (John 18:11); now if he prayed they might be kept from a temporal death, he was not heard, and yet he is always heard; for as for his disciples, they all died a violent death, suffered martyrdom for his sake; though they were all, in a spiritual sense, preserved to his kingdom and glory, as all true believers will be.

Moreover, as it was from evil that he desires his Father would keep them, it was the same which he kept them from, namely, from the "evil" of the world; not from suffering reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions in it; for such he has given all his followers reason to expect; but from sinking under them, and being overcome by them, so as to drop their profession of him; and from the evil one, Satan, under whose

influence the world is; and from the evil of sin in the world.

The time of Christ keeping those that were given him, "while I was with them in the world"; the expression does not imply, that he was not then in the world when he said these words, for he was, though the time of his departure was at hand; nor that he should be no longer with them when removed out of it; for though he would not be with them, as to his bodily presence, yet with respect to his spiritual, powerful, and all preserving presence, he would be with them still, and with all his people, to the end of the world: nor does the expression imply, that Christ's keeping those that were given him was confined to the time he was in the world as to the flesh; for at his death he did not "deliver up the kingdom to the Father", or the care and charge of his elect; this will not be done till his second coming; when he will say, "Lo, I, and the children", even all the children, "thou hast given me"; till then, all the elect remain under the care and keeping of Christ.

The manner in which he keeps them is in his Father's "name", in the name of the Majesty of his God; in which he stands and feeds them, as Mediator, through a delegated power and authority committed to him as such; and in his gospel, and the doctrines of it, called his "name" (John 18:6), in the faith of the gospel, and in the profession of it, so as not to relinquish either; and, indeed, so as to be "lost", no, not one of them, that is, to be eternally lost; for it is both his own will, and the will of his Father, that not one of those who truly believe in him, no not the least of them, should ever perish (Matthew 18:14; John 6:39, 40), and whereas it may be said, there is an instance in the text of one that was given to Christ who perished, Judas.

The answer is, that though Judas was given to Christ, and chosen by him as an apostle, yet was not given to him by an act of his Father's special grace; nor was he chosen in him, and by him, and united to him, and a member of him, as the rest were; nor does it appear, from all accounts of him, that he ever was a partaker of the true grace of God; and so no instance of the apostasy of a real saint. Judas stands distinguished from the rest of the apostles, in the choice of Christ; "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen", that is, to eternal life; for otherwise, Judas was chosen as an apostle with the rest; "Have I not chosen ye twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 13:18; 6:70), and as here, a son of perdition; and was never considered as an object of his, or his Father's love, and so was left to that perdition to which he was appointed, "that the scripture might be fulfilled", which foretold it; and the particle "but" is not exceptive, but adversative; and does not imply, that he was one of those given to Christ to be kept, but the contrary. 1g.

Seventhly, when the apostle says of God (1 Cor. 1:8, 9). "Who shall confirm you to the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ; faithful is God", &c. to do it; with other passages of the same kind (1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23, 24; 2 Thess. 3:3). These are so many proofs of the saints final perseverance. The blessing itself promised and assured is confirmation, or establishment, in Christ; in faith in Christ, in the grace of faith, and in the doctrine of faith, and in holiness: the author of it is God; though ministers may be instruments of establishing the saints; God is the efficient: he has promised it; and he, as the God of all grace, is able to do it, and will; "He which establisheth us with you in Christ is God" (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 Pet. 5:10), and the duration of it is to the end; not for a short time, but to the end of life; so that such shall endure to the end, or finally persevere; yea, so confirmed are they, that they shall be "unblameable at", and be "preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus"; though not in themselves, yet in him, who will then present them to himself glorious, and without spot; and to his Father faultless, before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.

And to do all this, the faithfulness of God is engaged, which is observed in the several passages; and which faithfulness of his he will never suffer to fail; and therefore the confirmation, and the preservation of the saints to the end, even to the coming of Christ, are sure and certain; and their final perseverance in grace to glory, out of all doubt. 1h. Eighthly, it is said of those who are "elect", and are "begotten again", that they "are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation" (1 Pet. 1:5), they are kept in the love of God, in the covenant of grace, in the hands of Christ, and on his heart; in him, the strong hold, and on him, the foundation; in a state of grace, both of sanctification and of justification; and in the paths of truth and holiness: they are kept from Satan, not from his temptations, but from destruction by him; and from false teachers, and their errors, from being carried away with them, and finally deceived by them: and from sin, not from the indwelling of it in the hearts of believers; nor from all acts of sin in their conversation; but from the dominion, power, and tyranny of it; and from a final and total falling away through it.

The means by which they are kept is, "the power of God", which is as a fortress to them, inexpugnable; where they are *frouroumeni*, kept, as in a garrison, as the word signifies, and so are safe and secure; there being no might or power of men or devils, that can withstand, break through, or weaken the power of God. Likewise they are kept, "through faith", in the power of God, and in the person and grace of Christ; through faith looking to Christ, living upon him, and leaning on him; through that faith which overcomes the world, and every spiritual enemy; and through the views it has of eternal glory; and so the believer endures, as seeing what is invisible: and what they are kept unto, is "salvation"; the full possession of that salvation which Christ is the author of, and they are heirs of; and which shall be completely enjoyed in a future state; to which, and till they come into it, their perseverance is certain.

There are many other passages of scripture, which might be produced in proof of this doctrine; but these are sufficient. I pass on, 2. To observe those arguments in proof of the saints final perseverance, taken from various sacred and divine things. As, 2a. First, from the perfections of God; whatever is agreeable to them, and made necessary by them, must be true; and whatever is contrary to them, and reflects dishonor on them, must be false. The doctrine of the saints final perseverance is agreeable to, and becomes necessary by them, and therefore must be true; but the contrary to it, that of the apostasy of real saints, so as to perish everlastingly, is repugnant to them, and reflects dishonor on them, and therefore must be false.

The perfections of God, which are manifestly displayed in the doctrine of the saints final perseverance, and by which it is confirmed, are the following. 2a1. The immutability of God. God is unchangeable; this is asserted by himself, "I am the Lord; I change not": and he himself drew this inference from it, "Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"; ye that are Israelites indeed perish not, nor ever shall; and after God himself, we may safely draw the same conclusion: if they are consumed, or perish everlastingly, he must change in his love to them, which he never does, but rests in it; and in his purposes and designs concerning them.

And those whom he has appointed to salvation, he must consign over to damnation; and his promises of grace made to them, and his blessings of grace bestowed on them, must be reversed; and yet he will not alter the thing that is gone out of his lips, nor change his mind; for he is "of one mind, and who can turn him?" The doctrine of the saints final perseverance asserts the unchangeableness of God, and does honour to it; but the contrary doctrine makes him changeable in his nature, will, and grace, and reflects dishonor on him, with whom there is no "variableness nor shadow of turning" (Mal. 3:6; Job 23:13; Jas. 1:17). 2a2.

The wisdom of God appears in this doctrine; and whose wisdom is seen in all his works of nature, providence, and grace; and is very conspicuous in the salvation of his people; which it would not be, should they perish. No wise man, who has an end in view, but will devise and make use of proper means; and will, if in his power, make those means effectual to attain the end, or he will not act a wise part. The end which God has in view, and has fixed, with respect to his people, is the salvation of them; and it can never be consistent with his wisdom to appoint insufficient means, or not make those means effectual, which it is in his power to do; which must be the case, if any of those he has appointed to salvation should perish.

Now as he has fixed the end, salvation, he has provided his Son to be the author of it, by his obedience, sufferings, and death; and has appointed as means to the enjoyment of this salvation, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth; for which purpose he sends his Spirit to sanctify them, and work faith in them, whereby these means become effectual, and the end is answered; and so the wisdom of God is highly displayed and glorified. But where would be his wisdom to appoint men to salvation, and not save them at last? to send his Son to redeem them, and they be never the better for it? and to send his Spirit into them, to begin a good work of grace, and not finish it?

But this is not the case, he has put the work of redemption into the hands of his Son, who has completed it; and assigned the work of sanctification, in its beginning, progress, and issue, to the divine Spirit, who is equal to it, and will perform it: and throughout the whole, God abounds towards his people in all wisdom and prudence. 2a3. The power of God is greatly concerned in this affair. Such who are elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, and are regenerated by his grace, are "kept by his power to salvation", so that they shall never perish, but be everlastingly saved.

Not only salvation is appointed as walls and bulwarks to them, which is a sufficient security; but God himself is a wall of fire about them; and no enemy can possibly break through such walls, bulwarks, and fortifications, to destroy them. God is all powerful, his power is irresistible, nothing can withstand it, nor overcome it; nothing in earth and hell is a match for it. And this power of his can never be weakened, nor his hand shortened, that he cannot save; which must be the case, if any of those kept by his power perish. 2a4.

The goodness, grace, and mercy of God, confirm this truth. "The mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him"; which it would not be, should any of those that truly fear him perish; "His compassions fail not"; which they would, should any of his be consumed; but because of his tender mercies they are not consumed: nor can it be thought that that God, who is "gracious and merciful, abundant in goodness and truth"; who has, of his "abundant mercy, begotten again his elect"; and because he is "rich in mercy", and for his "great love" to them, has "quickened" them when "dead in trespasses and sins"; will, after all this, suffer them to fall, so as to perish everlastingly; no, "the Lord will perfect that which concerneth" them, his work of grace upon them, and the whole salvation of them: the reason is, "Thy mercy, O Lord, endures for ever!" and then follows a prayer of faith; "Forsake not the work of thine own hands!" which God never will (Ps. 138:8). 2a5.

The justice of God makes the perseverance of the saints necessary. God is righteous in all his ways and works, and so in the work of salvation. He is a just God, and a Saviour; his justice is, and must be glorified, in the salvation of men, as the other attributes of his and it is through Christ's making satisfaction for sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness. And can it be imagined, that God should accept of the righteousness of his Son, and express a well pleasedness in it, because by it his law is magnified and

made honourable; that he should impute it to his people, and give them faith to receive it, and plead it as their justifying righteousness; and yet, after all, suffer them to perish?

Nay, where could be his justice, to punish those for whose sins Christ has made satisfaction, and God himself has discharged upon it? It is not consistent with the justice of God to punish sin twice; once in the surety, and again in those he has redeemed; which must be the case, if any for whom Christ suffered should perish eternally; for to perish eternally is the same as to be punished with everlasting destruction. 2a6. The faithfulness of God secures the final perseverance of the saints; God is faithful to his counsels, to his covenant, and to his promises concerning their salvation, and will never suffer his faithfulness to fail; which must fail if they perish.

But God is faithful, who has called them by his grace, and will confirm them to the end; will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear; will establish them, and keep them from evil; and will preserve them blameless to the coming of Christ; faithful is he who has promised, who also will do it. 2b. Secondly, the final perseverance of the saints may be concluded from the purposes and decrees of God; which are infrustrable, and are always accomplished; "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" or make it void, and of no effect? and "his hand is stretched out", to execute his purposes, "and who shall turn it back" from doing the thing he is resolved on? as he has "thought, so shall it come to pass"; and as he has "purposed, it shall stand" (Isa. 14:24, 27), though there may be a thousand devices in the hearts of men and devils, they can never counteract, nor undermine the decrees of God.

His "counsel shall stand", every purpose of his, and particularly his "purpose according to election"; which stands not upon the foot of "works", but upon the will "of him that calls", which is unalterable and irreversible. "The election hath obtained", or the elect, in all ages, have obtained righteousness, life, and salvation; it is not possible they should be deceived; nor can any charge be laid against them by law or justice, and therefore must be saved. Election is an ordination of men to eternal life, and therefore they shall never die the second death; it is an appointment of them to salvation, and therefore they shall be saved; they are chosen to obtain the glory of Christ, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; and accordingly they are sanctified by the Spirit, and do believe in Christ, who is the truth, and shall be glorified; for between their predestination and glorification, there is an inseparable connection; "Whom he did predestinate--them he also glorified" (Rom. 9:12, 13; 11:7; 8:30). 2c.

Thirdly, the argument in favour of the saints final perseverance, receives great strength from the promises of God, which are sure, and are all yea and amen in Christ, and are always fulfilled; not one of the good things God has promised has ever failed; and many are his promises, as has been observed, concerning the perseverance of his people; as that they shall hold on their way, and be stronger and stronger; that he will not turn away from them; and they shall never depart from him; with a multitude of others; and, in general, he has promised, he will never leave nor forsake them: and therefore it is impossible they should perish; for then his promises and his faithfulness in them would be of none effect; which ought not to be said. 2d.

Fourthly, this truth may be further confirmed from the gracious acts of God, flowing from his everlasting and unchangeable love. The love of God to his people is an everlasting love, which it would not be should they perish; for none can perish and remain the objects of his love: but his love always remains, it is never taken away, nor does it ever depart, nor can there be any separation from it; and consequently those interested in it can never be finally and totally lost: and there are many acts of grace arising from this love, which show it; not to take notice of the act of election before observed, which secures their salvation; nor

the covenant of grace, from the perpetuity of which this point has been argued; nor the act of putting the elect into Christ's hands, from whence they can never be plucked; there are several others which ascertain the same thing; two or three of which I shall mention. 2d1.

The adoption of the children of God into his family; by which he takes them for his sons and daughters; which is a wonderful instance of his love (1 John 3:1), now to this they are predestinated according to the good pleasure of his will; and this predestination and appointment of them to adoption is his will to adopt them; and his will to adopt them is the adoption of them; this is what is called a putting them among the children (Jer. 3:19), and whom God puts among the children, and accounts as such, it is not in the power of men or devils to put them out; nor can they put out themselves, should they even desire it, or express their contentment to be no longer sons but to be servants; it is impracticable and not to be admitted, as the case of the prodigal shows (Luke 15:19, 21), the blessing is bestowed in the covenant of grace, and is irreversible; Christ by his redemption as made way for the reception of it, which makes his redemption a plenteous one, this with other blessings of grace, being included in it; and to them that receive him, and believe in him, he gives a power to become the sons of God; his Spirit witnesses to theirs that they are so, and by faith it becomes manifest.

Now between sonship and heirship there is a close connection: "if a son, no more a servant of sin and Satan, and the world, but an heir of God through Christ; if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Gal. 4:7; Rom. 8:17), and can a child of God become a child of the devil? shall an heir of heaven be seen in the flames of hell? or shall one that is a joint heir with Christ, come short of the incorruptible inheritance? no, that is reserved for them, and they are kept to that by the power of God. 2d2.

Justification is another act of God's free grace, and the fruit of his ancient love (Rom. 3:24; 5:17), the sentence is pronounced in the mind of God by himself, and none can reverse it; it is God that justifies, and who shall condemn? such as are justified by him can never come into condemnation and everlastingly perish; otherwise how could he be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus; if, after all, notwithstanding his imputation of the righteousness of his Son to them, and the justification of them by it, and their reception of it by faith, they should be condemned? or how would Christ's righteousness be an everlasting righteousness and answer for his people in a time to come, should they be condemned with the world and excluded from the kingdom of heaven? or how would this righteousness of his be unto justification of life? or what would signify their being made heirs of eternal life through it? or of what avail would their title to it by it be unto them, if after all they perish eternally?

But the connection between justification and glorification is inseparable; "whom he justified them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30), and most certain it is, that the righteous, who are justified by Christ's righteousness shall go into everlasting life when the wicked will go into eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46). 2d3. Pardon of sin is another act of the riches of divine grace, and flows from unmerited and distinguishing love. Those whom God forgives for Christ's sake, on account of his blood shed for the remission of their sins, and upon the foot of satisfaction made for them by him, he forgives all their iniquities; not one sin is left unforgiven; and if so, how can they be destroyed or perish everlastingly?

Is it possible that a man should go to hell with a full and free pardon of all his sins in his hands? Was ever any man executed, having received the king's pardon? and especially can it be thought that any whom the King of kings has pardoned, whose acts can never be made void, should yet suffer everlasting punishment for sin? no, when "the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none" to be laid to their charge, being cleared of all; and "the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found", nor any bill on account of

them be found against them, and that for this reason; "for I will pardon them whom I reserve", that is, for himself; and if reserved for himself, being fully pardoned by his grace, they shall be preserved from everlasting destruction. 2e.

Fifthly, The saints final perseverance in grace to glory, and security from ruin and destruction, may be concluded from the love of Christ to them, his interest in them, and theirs in him. Christ's love to them was from everlasting, his delights were with those sons of men before the world was, and from it nothing can separate them: "having loved his own, which were in the world, he loves them to the end" (John 13:1), to the end of their lives, and to all eternity; and therefore they can never perish.

And they are not only the objects of his love, dear unto him, but they are his care and charge, who are committed to him to be kept by him; and he has undertook the care of them, has eternal life to give them, and does give it to them, and they shall never perish, but have it; yea, they have it already, a right unto it and earnest of it; and as they are his Father's "gift" to him, to be preserved by him, so they are the "purchase" of his blood, the flock he has purchased with it, and he will not lose one of them; should he, so far his blood would be shed for nought, and his death be in vain.

They are "members" of his body, and can never be separated from it; should they, even the least member of them, his body, the church, would not be "the fulness of him that filleth all in all"; if anyone member in a natural body should be wanting, even the least, it would not be a complete body; and this would be the case of Christ's mystical body, should any member in it perish; but as sure as Christ the head lives, so sure shall every member of his body live also, and never die.

They are his "children", his spiritual seed and offspring, to whom he stands in the relation of an "everlasting Father"; these are a "seed" that it is promised he shall see and enjoy for ever, and that they shall "endure for ever"; nor shall anyone of them be missing at the great day; but Christ will present them to his Father complete and safe, who gave them to him, saying, "Lo, I, and the children thou hast given me!" They are his "spouse" and bride, whom he has betrothed to himself in lovingkindness, and that for ever, to whom he stands in the relation of an "husband"; and between whom there is a conjugal and indissoluble union; whom he has so loved as to give himself for, to sanctify and cleanse, and make them spotless and glorious in his sight; and after all the cost and pains he has been at to make her so, can it be thought he will suffer this choice one, and beloved spouse of his, or any of them that make up this spiritual body, to perish eternally?

They are his "portion, and the lot of his inheritance", his Father has given him, and he is well pleased with; they are his "jewels", and he will never lose any of them; they are a crown of glory, and a royal diadem in his hand; his Hephzibah, in whom he delights; his Beulah, to whom he is married, and he will employ all his power in the preservation and security of them. They are on him the "foundation" laid in Zion, which is sure and everlasting; on which all those who are laid are safe, and from whence they can never be removed by all the winds and waves, storms and tempests, raised by sin, Satan, and the world; they are built upon a rock immovable, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail.

They are interested in the intercession of Christ, which is always prevalent; for he is always heard; and he ever lives to make intercession for them; not only for all the necessary supplies of grace, for grace to help them in time of need; but for their eternal glorification (John 17:24). Lastly, Christ is making "preparations" in heaven for them; he is gone beforehand, and entered into heaven as their forerunner, and in their name to take possession for them; he is gone to prepare a place, and fit up mansions of glory for them; and has

promised to come and take them to himself, that where he is they may be also (John 14:2, 3).

And are these mansions preparing in vain? and shall these seats and dwelling places be empty of those for whom they are designed, or any of them? this would be the case should any perish for whom Christ is gone to prepare a place. 2f. Sixthly, A further proof of this doctrine may be taken from the work of grace, and the nature of it; and from the Spirit's concern in it, as the author of it, in those in whom it is wrought. Grace is an incorruptible seed, that never dies; it always remains, and is the reason why those in whom it is shall not sin unto death, or so sin as to die eternally: it is a well of living water, springing up unto eternal life: grace and glory are inseparably connected; to whom God gives the one, he assuredly gives the other.

The several particular graces of which the work consists, are abiding ones, as faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13:13). Faith ever remains; it is more precious than gold that perisheth; and for that reason, among others, because it perishes not, when gold does; Christ, who is the author, is the finisher of it; though it may sometimes seem as if it would fail, it shall not fail, through his powerful and prevalent mediation; he that truly believes in Christ, shall be most certainly saved by him, if there is any truth in the gospel of Christ.

"Hope", though a lowly grace, is a lively one; however, is always a living one, and is an anchor sure and steadfast; and is of great use to the saint under all his trials and afflictions in life, and will continue with him till death; "For the righteous hath hope in his death"; nor will it ever make ashamed, because it never disappoints, nor is disappointed. Love, though it sometimes waxes cold, and the first love may be left, though not lost; it is of such a nature, that all the floods of afflictions, persecution, and temptations, can never quench.

The church in darkness, and without the presence of Christ, and sight of him, could even then describe him as the Person whom her soul loved. Peter, though he fell so grievously, through the temptations of Satan, yet did not lose his love to Christ; but upon first meeting with him, when asked the question, and that repeated again and again, declared he did love him; yea, he appeals to him, as the omniscient God, that he knew he loved him. The Spirit of God is the author of this work of grace; it is he who begins it, and will perform it, till the day of Christ, and finish what he has begun.

He has his residence in the hearts of the Lord's people, and dwells in them, as in his temple; nor does he ever utterly depart from them; he is given to abide with them, and he does. Yea he is given as the earnest and pledge of their glorious inheritance; and having such an earnest, can they doubt, or have any reason to doubt, of their full enjoyment of it, since by him, they are sealed unto the day of redemption? In a word, the glory of the three divine Persons is concerned in the final perseverance of the saints; for should they, or any of them perish, where would be the glory of the Father in choosing them to salvation? and the glory of the Son in redeeming them? and the glory of the Spirit in the sanctification of them? respecting them, their glory would be lost, should they come short of heaven and happiness; but since the doctrine of the saints final perseverance is bound together with this threefold cord, which cannot be broken, the certainty of it may be depended upon.

I proceed, 3a. To answer to, and remove the objections made, to this doctrine. 3a. First, from some passages of scripture which may seem to be contrary unto it; or, however, are brought to disprove it. 3a1. The first passage of scripture, and which is usually set in the front of those that are brought against the saints final perseverance, is Ezekiel 18:24. "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness", &c. from whence it is concluded, that a man may be truly just and good, and yet become a very wicked man, and die in his sins, and perish everlastingly. 3a1a.

The scope of the chapter should be attended to; which is to vindicate the justice of God in the dispensations of his providence towards the people of Israel: they had a proverb much in use among them, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge": the meaning of which was, their fathers had sinned, and they their children were punished for their sins; upon which they charged the ways of God with inequality and injustice. In answer to which, the Lord says, that whereas all souls were his, as the soul of the father, so the soul of the son, it was the soul that sinned that should die, or be punished with one temporal calamity or another; that if a man was a just man, and behaved well, he should live comfortably and happily in the land; if not, he should die, as to civil enjoyment in it, and be removed from it; for, 3a1b.

This chapter, and the context of it, only relate to the land of Israel, and to the house of Israel, the inhabitants of it; who, when first put into the possession of it, had a law given them; and according to their obedience, or disobedience to it, they were to live in the land, or be driven out of it; for they held their tenure by their obedience; if they were willing to serve the Lord, and keep his statutes, and be obedient to them, then they should eat the good of the land and enjoy the benefits of it (Isa. 1:19), but if they were disobedient, they were to be exiled from it, and be captives in another land; which was now their case, and of which they complained.

And, 3a1c. By the "righteous man" in the text is not meant one truly righteous; no man is truly righteous by the works of the law in the sight of God, these being imperfect; but he that is made righteous, by the perfect obedience and righteousness of Christ imputed to him, anti received by faith. But there is not a word in the text, nor context, of the obedience and righteousness of Christ, which is an "everlasting righteousness"; from which no man that has it can turn, so as to die and perish eternally; for then it would not be everlasting: nor can a man that has true faith in this righteousness, or that lives by faith upon it, "commit iniquity"; that is, live a sinful course of life, make a trade of sinning, addict himself wholly to it; for such a man is a servant of sin, a slave to it, and of the devil; which can never be said of a truly just and good man; for though there is not a just man that doth good and sinneth not, yet he doth not sin at such a rate as this; the "seed" of grace remains in him, and he cannot sin, as to do "all the abominations" the wicked man does.

Nor can he die spiritually and eternally; the just man lives by faith upon that righteousness by which he becomes just; he lives by the faith of the Son of God; and he that lives and believes in Christ shall never die spiritually; and the righteousness of Christ is upon him, "unto justification of life", and entitles him to eternal life; and therefore he shall never be hurt by the second death; he shall never come into condemnation; but being righteous, shall be "righteous still", and evermore so.

But this is to be understood of one that only seemed to be a righteous man, was so in the sight of others, and in his own account, but not really so; one that reckoned himself righteous by his "own righteousness", and "trusted in" that; (Ezek. 33:13) a righteousness that consisted of a few external, moral performances; as appears from Ezekiel 33:5-9 and from such a righteousness, or course of living, a man may turn, and give up himself to all manner of wickedness; and become like the dog and the swine in the proverb; when it would have been better if such a man had not known the way of righteousness, than after to have turned from the holy commandment delivered to him. 3a1d.

The death here spoken of, and in other passages in this chapter; as in Ezekiel 33:23, 31, 32 is not an eternal death, or the death of the soul and body in hell; for this was now upon them, of which they were complaining, imagining it was for their fathers sins; but of some severe judgment, or sore calamity, or

some great affliction, which is called a "death"; as in Exodus 10:17; 2 Cor. 1:10; 11:23 so here the exile of the Jews from their native country, and captivity in a foreign land, which was a civil death, is here so called; wherefore no argument cast be formed from hence to prove the saints perishing eternally.

And, 3a1e. After all the words are only a supposition; "When", or "if, a righteous man, turn from his righteousness"; and a supposition puts nothing in being, proves nothing, is no instance of matter of fact; and all that can be concluded from the whole is, that a just man may sin, and be afflicted for sin, which he may, and yet be everlastingly saved. 3a2. Another passage of scripture brought against the saints final perseverance, and to prove their falling from grace, is the case of the stony ground hearer; who is said to "hear the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Matthew 13:20, 21).

Or as in Luke 8:13. "Which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away". But it should be observed, 3a2a. That those persons thus described, were not truly good and gracious persons; for though the seed, or word, fell upon them, they were a rock, stony ground still; they were yet in a state of nature, no change or alteration in them; their hearts were as hard as an adamant stone; the stony heart was not taken away from them, nor an heart of flesh given them; otherwise the word would have had a place in them, took root in them, would have sprung up, and brought forth fruit. 3a2b.

And though they received the word with "joy", this is what a wicked man, a very wicked man, may do; and Herod did, who heard John "gladly", though he afterwards took off his head; such a man may receive the word with a flash of natural affection, and be pleased with it; being so far enlightened, as to see the truth, the harmony of it, and some interesting things in it; he may flatter himself he shall share in; so that this joy arises only from a principle of self-love: such do not receive it as the Thessalonians did, "in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost"; having been either in great distress of soul, on account of sin, when the gospel of peace and pardon coming to them, was joyfully received as good news and glad tidings; or though they were reproached and persecuted for hearing, receiving, and professing the gospel, they rejoiced at it, and abode by it: but so did not these stony ground hearers; for when tribulation or persecution arose because of the word, they were offended and gone; their joy was the joy of the hypocrite, which is but for a moment. 3a2c.

The faith they had was but "for a while", as it is expressed (Luke 8:13), it was a temporary faith, like that of Simon Magus, who, though he professed to believe, was in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity; their faith was not the faith of God's elect; for that stands sure, upon the same footing as electing grace itself does, from whence it springs; it was not that faith which is the gift of God; for his gifts of grace are without repentance, and are never revoked, but always abide: not that faith which is the operation of God; for that is maintained and performed with power: not that faith of which Christ is the author; for of that he is the finisher; and though it is sometimes low and languid, he prays for it that it fail not. 3a2d.

Those persons had no root in themselves, and therefore withered; they had not "the root of the matter" in them, as Job calls it, the truth of grace; they were not rooted in the love of God, nor in Christ, and had not the grace of God rooted in them; otherwise they would have been fruitful and established; for "the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit", and is "not moved" (Prov. 12:3, 12). 3a2e. Those persons are manifestly distinguished from the "good ground", into which the seed was received (Matthew 13:23), and from an "honest and good heart", in which they that heard the word kept it (Luke 8:15), and so were not truly good and gracious persons, on whom the good work of grace was begun; were not trees made good, and so

they brought forth no good fruit: wherefore the withering and falling away of those are no proofs and instances of the saints so falling as to perish everlastingly. 3a3.

Another passage of scripture produced to invalidate the doctrine of the saints final perseverance, is in John 15:2, 6. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; if man abide not in me he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned". From whence it is inferred, that men may be branches in Christ, the true vine, and yet so fall as to perish everlastingly. Now it should be observed, that there is a twofold being in Christ, and two sorts of branches in him. 3a3a.

There are some who are truly and really in him through the grace of God; not only secretly by electing grace, being chosen in him; but by powerful and efficacious grace in effectual calling; who are created in Christ, and are new creatures in him, and have a vital union with him, and become fruitful by him: these are rooted and built up in him, and are established in the faith of him; and shall never be rooted up, but always have an abiding in him; and these are fruit bearing branches in him; all their fruit is from him, and they are filled with it by him; and continue so even in old age, to the end of life; being under the constant care and culture of Christ's Father, the Husbandman, who purges and prunes them by his word, and by his Spirit, so that they bring forth much fruit, whereby he is glorified. 3a3b.

There are others who are in him only by profession; which must be supposed of many of the members of external visible churches, which are said to be "in Christ" (Gal. 1:21; 1 Thess. 1:1), who, in a judgment of charity, are said to be so; though it cannot be thought that every individual member of them were really in Christ, only by profession; and such as these not being truly engrafted into him, though they have a place in his churches; being destitute of the true grace of God, are unfruitful, and wither in their profession; and fall into immoral practices, or unsound principles, and are cast out of the churches; and at last, like withered branches, or chaff, are burnt with unquenchable fire.

But what is this to real saints, or true believers in Christ? or what proof of their falling and perishing everlastingly? 3a4. Another instance of saints falling from grace is that of the broken branches from the olive tree; and the threatening of such who are grafted into it with being cut off, if they continue not in goodness (Rom. 11:17-22). From whence it is observed, that such who are grafted in the good olive tree, the spiritual and invisible church, may, nevertheless, so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

But, 3a4a. By the good olive tree is not meant the spiritual and invisible church; that general assembly and church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven; which consists only of elect men; and whose number will neither be increased nor diminished; that church which Christ gave himself for to sanctify, and does sanctify; and whom he will present to himself a glorious church, not one missing; that church of which he is the head, and that his body and the fulness of him, which it would not be should any member thereof perish.

But, 3a4b. This olive tree is to be understood of the outward gospel church state, or the outward visible church, under the gospel dispensation; the national church of the Jews, which is compared to an olive tree (Jer. 11:16), being abolished, and its branches broken off and scattered, a gospel church state was set up in Judea; and therefore called their "own olive tree". Now out of this, the broken branches, or the unbelieving Jews, were left; not admitted into the church at Jerusalem, nor elsewhere in Judea: and when there was a coalition of believing Jews and Gentiles, which were first made at Antioch, these were left out.

So that, 3a4c. Those; who are signified by the broken branches were never true believers in Christ; but because of their unbelief in him, and reflection of him, were broken off, and were never engrafted into, but left out of the gospel church; these were such who did not belong to the election of grace among the Jews; but were the rest, that were blinded; and so no instances of the falling away of true believers. 3a4d. Though those who are grafted in are threatened to be cut off, in case they continued not in goodness; meaning, not the goodness, grace, and love of God; but the goodness of the good olive, the gospel church; not abiding in the ordinances of it, and walking worthy of them, in which they were, then they should be cut off; not from the grace and favour of God, nor from an interest in Christ; but from the church, and the privileges of it; and who might be grafted in again, being restored by repentance; which is sometimes the case, and will be the case of the natural branches, the Jews; who, when they are converted, and brought to believe in Christ, will be grafted into their own good olive, and then all Israel shall be saved (Rom. 11:25, 26). 3a5.

The passage of the apostle Paul concerning himself is wrested to such a purpose; "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27). The word *adokimoV* is not to be rendered "reprobate", as it sometimes is; nor to be understood of such an one as opposed to an elect person; for an elect person, as the apostle was, for he includes himself among such (Eph 1:4), can never be a reprobate in such a sense; for elect persons always obtain righteousness, life, and eternal salvation; though the faith of nominal professors may be subverted, theirs cannot; the foundation stands sure on which they are; and those who are predestinated, or ordained unto eternal life, as they believe, so they shall be glorified, and never be treated as non-elect.

The apostle could never fear that he should be a castaway in such a sense as to perish everlastingly; he knew Christ, in whom he had believed, to be an able and complete Saviour, and that he was his Saviour and would keep what he had committed to him; he knew his interest in the everlasting love of God, and was persuaded nothing should separate him from it: he instances in himself, as a proof that God had not cast away his people, whom he foreknew (Rom. 11:1, 2; 8:38, 39; 2 Tim. 1:12).

But as the Greek word used signifies disapproved, the sense of the apostle seems to be this, that he was careful not to indulge to sensual gratifications; but to keep his body under a due decorum and in subjection to proper rules; and not yield the members of it as instruments of unrighteousness; lest while he preached the gospel of the grace of God to others, he might stand reprov'd himself, and be disapproved by men, and his ministry become contemptible and useless; (see 2 Cor. 6:3).

And the fears and jealousies of the saints over themselves are not inconsistent with their perseverance in grace, much less disprove it; but are means of their perseverance in it. 3a6. When the apostle says, "Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4), it is not meant of falling from the grace, favour, and love of God in his heart; for that is everlasting and unchangeable, as immovable as hills and mountains, and more so; they may depart, but the lovingkindness of God to his people never will depart; there is nothing in heaven, earth, or hell, that can separate from that; and consequently there can be no falling from it: nor of falling from the grace of God wrought in their hearts; for that is an incorruptible seed, which never dies, is never lost, but always remains: but of falling from the doctrine of grace; and particularly that glorious doctrine of free justification by the righteousness of Christ, without the deeds of the law; which some of the Galatians who had formerly embraced it, fell from, seeking for justification by the works of the law.

And in like sense are we to understand other similar passages; as when the apostle beseeches "not to receive the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6:1), the love and favour of God cannot be received in vain, being shed abroad in the heart by the Spirit of God; nor the grace of God implanted in the heart, which is an abiding seed there; but the doctrine of grace, when it is either dropped, or denied, or turned into lasciviousness, and men walk unbecoming their profession of it: and so in Hebrews 12:15.

"Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God"; depart from the gospel, and drop his profession of it, or walk as does not become it. Once more, 3a7. What the apostle says of Hymeneus and Alexander is produced as a proof of the apostasy of real saints; "holding faith and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith, have made shipwreck; of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander" (1 Tim. 1:19). But, 3a7a. It does not appear that these men were ever truly good men; of Hymeneus it is said, that he was a vain babbler, and increased to more and more ungodliness: and of Alexander, who is supposed to be the same with Alexander the coppersmith, that he did the apostle much evil by reproaching and persecuting him; by hindering him in his ministry as much as in him lay, and withstanding and contradicting his doctrines; and so can be no instances of true beli

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