

I. Read II Corinthians 1:21-24

- A. In verse 21, Paul explains that the believer's *position* is established "in Christ." Read the following verses and describe what they reveal about the believer's *position* "in Christ."

Note on v21 from The Reformation Study Bible: The ability to persevere, that is, to continue in the Christian life, is not from ourselves; it is a gift from God. God continues to give this ability to all who are born again (Phil. 1:6; 1 Peter 1:5). Those who are guarded by God in this way continue to trust in Christ throughout their lives (13:5; Col. 1:23; Heb. 3:14), because God protects them through the faith He gives them (v24).

Col. 1:13

Whereas we were part of Satan's kingdom, Christ has provided us with citizenship papers for God's kingdom.

Col. 1:14

We are redeemed from the sentence of death by Christ's substitutionary atonement. We are forgiven (pardoned) from all transgressions (the breaking of the law) by Christ. This is what is meant by the phrase "Christ died for you."

Col. 1:22

We who are sinful are made holy by Christ.

Romans 5:10

We were God's enemies. Christ has established the only possible basis for peace between God and man. This is our reconciliation.

Romans 5:19

We have the perfect righteousness of Christ credited to our account.

John 10:28-29

The secure position of the believer cannot be altered by anyone or anything.

Galatians 4:5-7

The believer is not only pardoned and righteous in God's sight because of Christ, but he is adopted as God's son or daughter. We actually share Christ's inheritance eternally.

- B. In v21 we read that the believer is "anointed" (NAS). In what sense is the believer "anointed?"

Note from The Reformed Study Bible: To "anoint" literally is to pour oil on the head, often as a sign of divine calling and empowerment...Paul reminds us that just as God anointed Jesus for a particular service and ministry, so He has anointed us for our ministries, not with oil, but with the power of the Holy Spirit.

According to *Vines Expository Dictionary*, the anointing of believers refers to God rendering them "holy, separating them to God." This separation is tied to the gift of the Holy Spirit by which they possess a new capacity to understand God's Word and the gospel, and especially to serve God through the use of our spiritual gifts, time, and treasure.

- C. In verse 22, the effects of the indwelling presence of God the Holy Spirit are described. What two words are used in the verse to explain the permanence of the gift?
The word “sealed” is used, conveying the irrevocable nature of the gift of God the Holy Spirit and salvation. The second word which explains the permanence of our position in Christ is “pledge” (NAS). In the KJV the word “earnest” is used rather than “pledge,” conveying the idea of proof of intent to fulfill a contract, such as *earnest money*, which initiates the sale of real estate. The *Reformed Study Bible’s* comments emphasize God’s “ownership and guaranteed protection” of the believer.
- D. In verses 22 and 23, the present position of the believer is explained and the future state of the believer is alluded to. What is the future state of the believer?
To spend eternity with God and the whole company of the redeemed. The *Reformed Study Bible’s* comments explain that “the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of the complete salvation yet to be realized.”
- E. In verses 23-24, Paul introduces the subject he will address in the following verses. In Chapter 2 he will rebuke the Corinthians for their unwillingness to forgive a repentant sinner. He explains that he has delayed his visit to give them time to repent of their unforgiveness. Read II Peter 3:9 and explain what it tells us about God’s approach to man’s stubborn refusal to repent.
II Peter 3:9 conveys the mercy and justice of God, assuring us that all men are granted an adequate amount of time and opportunity to repent before incurring the judgment and wrath of God. The *Reformed Study Bible* comments that “the apparent delay of divine judgment is a sign of God’s forbearance and mercy toward them.”
- F. Considering the fact that God’s Holy Spirit resides in the heart of the believer, what conclusions may we draw about the Arminian notion that believers can lose their salvation (fall from grace)?
Arminians believe that God the Holy Spirit is not able or willing to *keep* us in a state of grace. Logistically, it also would mean that God the Holy Spirit must hop in and out of the believer, depending on the believer’s ability and willingness to obey God’s law. In other words, in the course of a believer’s life, he will have high points and low points, times of obedience and disobedience. When he willfully disobeys God, he loses his salvation and God the Holy Spirit must vacate the premises. When he repents, God the Holy Spirit moves back in. Then (whoops!), he sins again and there goes God the Holy Spirit. Later, he repents and back comes God the Holy Spirit. This is, of course, absurd, yet it is the logistical consequence of believing Christians can lose their salvation (as all Arminians do).
- G. If God the Holy Spirit is given to the believer as a pledge of the promise of salvation and heaven, to withdraw the pledge because a believer sinned would be evidence of bad faith on the part of God. Read Romans 11:29 and comment on whether or not God would withdraw the gift of the Holy Spirit after He has been given to the believer.
No, He would not.
- H. Perseverance of the Saints is described in *The Reformed Study Bible* as “continued adherence to a belief despite discouragement and opposition. The reason that believers persevere in faith and obedience, however, is not the strength of their own commitment, but that Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit preserves them.” What are some misunderstandings of this important doctrine common amongst evangelicals?
1. That all who ever professed to be Christians will be saved. A public profession may or may not be evidence of genuine conversion. This is one of the dangers of the *altar call* system that seems to imply that you are saved by simply responding publicly to an invitation to “decide for Christ.”

2. That the idea that *once saved always saved* is an accurate reflection of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. The key difference is found in the meaning of the word *perseverance*. Another way *once saved always saved* is expressed is through the phrase *eternal security*. As an abridgement of perseverance of the saints, it is true enough, but it is not a comprehensive statement of the perseverance of the saints.
3. That believers who “backslide into sin” were obviously never truly converted. *The Reformed Study Bible’s* comments explain that “The regenerate may backslide and fall into sin. In so doing they oppose their own new nature and the Holy Spirit convicts them of their sin and compels them to repent and be restored to righteousness.” No person can see into another person’s heart, but we can see another person’s actions. Nevertheless, it is unwise to jump to conclusions about another’s salvation. Notwithstanding this, when there is no conviction in a professed believer who has backslidden into sin, there is cause to be concerned about that person’s spiritual condition. Christians can never be *comfortable* while being in sin despite the fact that sin may be pleasurable for a season.