CURRENT ISSUES IN SOTERIOLOGY

Papers Presented at a Symposium of
The International Society for Biblical Hermeneutics

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Current Issues in Soteriology: Papers Presented at a Symposium of The International Society for Biblical Hermeneutics

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Preface

The message of salvation is rather simple: God gives eternal life to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ. The doctrine of salvation, often called *soteriology*, is more complex. What is eternal life? What does *believe* mean? Who is Jesus Christ? What right does He have to offer anything to anyone? Is faith in Christ really sufficient? Is faith even necessary? Erroneous soteriology can hinder an individual's spiritual maturity. Worse yet, false soteriology can even inhibit the proclamation of the saving message itself. This volume addresses a handful of current issues in soteriology that are problematic for both believers and nonbelievers around the globe.

The chapters were presented at the first symposium for The International Society for Biblical Hermeneutics (ISBH) in January 2021. Being a new venture, ISBH deemed it appropriate to begin with a volume on the doctrine of salvation. This is not to say that every member agrees on every aspect of soteriology, nor does it mean that any participant in ISBH has arrived at his final understanding. On the contrary, Christians should be discussing these issues with each other and growing in their knowledge of the Bible and theology therein.

In the first chapter, Paul Miles divides soteriological compromises into four quadrants: two of which compromise on the sufficiency of faith alone in Christ alone, and two of which compromise on the necessity of faith in Christ. Responding to one compromise on faith's sufficiency, David James discusses a conundrum of Lordship Salvation. Tom Stegall defends faith's sufficiency from another attack in his chapter, "Does John's Gospel Require Continual Belief for Eternal Salvation?" and Paul Miles answers another common question in "Does James Make Works a Criterion for Eternal Life?" The short answer to both questions is "No." David James then compares and contrasts Eastern and Western Catholicism, both of which advocate works-based merit, but each in their distinct ways. He then discusses

a question of pluralism in the chapter, "Justification: Are Evangelicals and Catholics Really Together?" The short answer to this question is also "No." James Myers brings balance to the controversial issue of Old Testament salvation and then provides an overview of baptisms. Both of these topics are of dispensational significance with implications in soteriology. Dennis Rokser and Daniel Goepfrich conclude this volume with two issues that are relevant to the Christian's life in the chapters, "The Free Grace Faux Pas: Justification by Grace Followed by Sanctification by Works?" and "Biblical Discipleship: Sanctification in Practice" respectively. Finally, the ISBH doctrinal statement is included as an appendix.

As we submit this volume, our prayer is that it will help readers to better understand the word of God, for our theology only has value if it aligns with what the Bible already says. May God alone receive the glory.

Paul Miles
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March 2021

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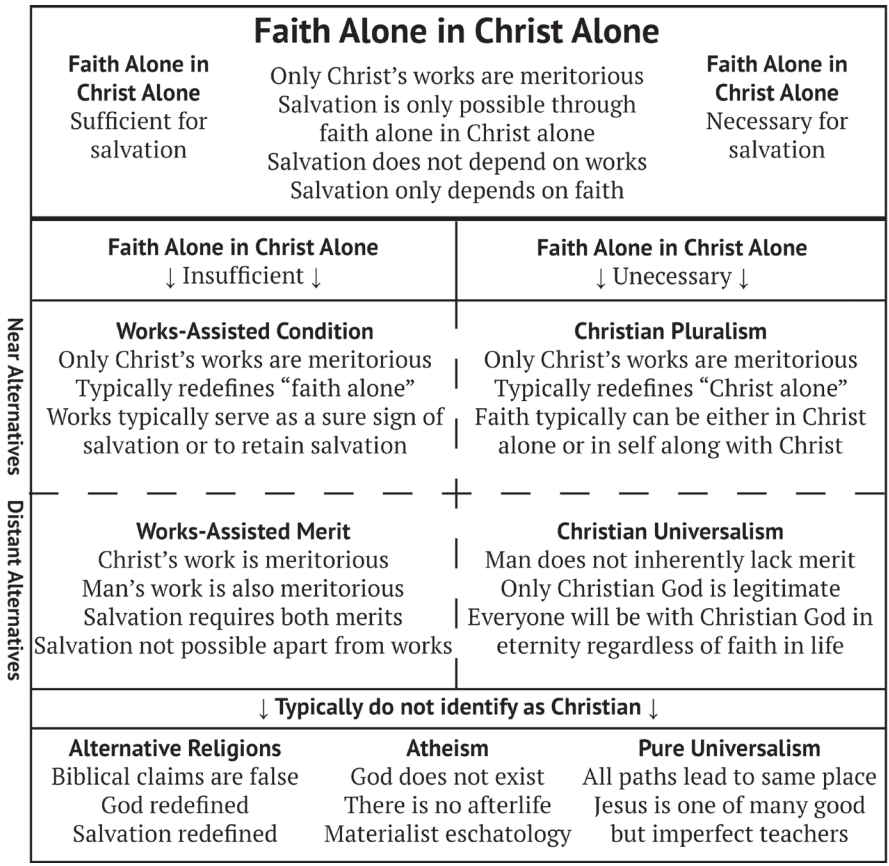
A Quadrant Model Of Soteriological Compromises

Paul Miles

The purpose of this symposium and the following volume is to describe the soteriological tendencies of The International Society for Biblical Hermeneutics (ISBH). Soteriology is a touchy topic, so it is imperative to establish the boundaries upfront, lest there be yet another schism in the years to come. The position of ISBH can be described as Faith Alone in Christ Alone (FACA). This view is not held by consensus but rather is derived biblically. Many who fall under the umbrella of Christendom reject our perspective, typically because they deem FACA either to be insufficient or unnecessary to varying degrees, and outside of Christendom are those who reject the Gospel for even more reasons. The following chart shows the relation of FACA to other perspectives:

The top represents FACA, and the bottom lists views that typically do not self-identify as Christian. The quadrant in the middle of the chart divides the bulk of Christendom in terms of direction (left, right) and distance (near, distant). The left has Works-Assisted Condition (WAC) and Works-Assisted Merit (WAM), both of which compromise the sufficiency of FACA. The right has Christian Pluralism (CP) and Christian Universalism (CU), both of which compromise the necessity of FACA. The distant views (WAM, CU) are more extreme than the near alternatives (WAC, CP).



The differences are vast and often confusing. Within Christendom, many will use the phrase, "Faith alone in Christ alone," including Protestants who espouse Works-Assisted Condition (WAC) and Christian Pluralism (CP), but while we may be using the same words, we are often using different dictionaries; these arguments are over the application of (but not source of) salvific merit and often deal with semantics. Others, especially the more distant views of WAM camps, are more likely to reject faith alone and say that works are meritorious; these disagreements are rooted more in source of

salvific merit than WAC or CP. Yet others come from the CU perspective and argue that God will save everyone; these arguments may appeal to liberalism or perhaps cherry-pick aspects from opposing soteriological and eschatological systems to render faith in Christ unnecessary in this life.

The broad and complex nature of soteriological distinctions renders soteriological reductionism ineffective,[1] so this model does not intend to over-simplify any issues but instead hopes to develop a better presentation and understanding of perspectives within Christendom. Space restrictions prohibit a thorough response to each view, but in hopes of clarifying IFCA's position and equipping readers for more meaningful evangelistic conversations, this paper will attempt to present each of these perspectives, especially the four that are Christian, yet non-FACA, and common trends within the perspectives.

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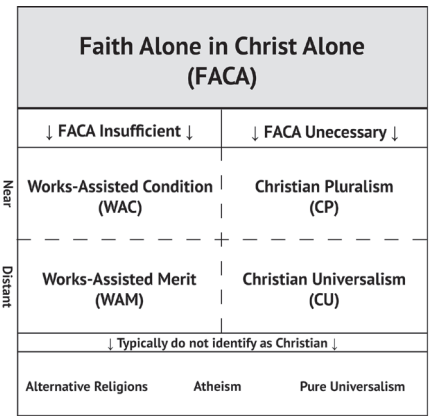
[1] A particular controversy from the turn of the century comes to mind. With good intentions, Zane Hodges attempted to reduce the core of the Message of Life to a bare minimum of content that is necessary to believe for salvation and the resulting content excluded the cross. As Hodges points out in the final paragraphs of his paper, "apart from the cross, for most modern Americans, the offer of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone, just doesn't compute" (p. 12). His point was that the evangelist should direct people to believe in Christ and his paper could actually be read as an early critique of CP and CU. Hodges' pursuit has merit as an attempt to identify the direction to lead evangelistic conversations in theory, but whether or not we agree with Hodges' final conclusions, a prerogative of ISBH is agreement that in practice, reductionism does not make good disciples. Several responses and defenses ensued, Stegall's response being the most exhaustive. See Zane C. Hodges, "How to Lead People to Christ: Part 1 The Content of Our Message" *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 13:2 (Autumn 2000), 3–12; Thomas Stegall, *The Gospel of the Christ: A Biblical Response to the Crossless Gospel Regarding the Content of Saving Faith* (Milwaukee, WI: Grace Gospel Press, 2009).

THE TOP: FAITH ALONE IN CHRIST ALONE (FACA)

- Only Christ's works are meritorious
- Salvation is only possible through faith alone in Christ alone
- Salvation does not depend on works
- Salvation only depends on faith



We believe that the Bible teaches that man is saved simply through faith alone in Christ alone. In brief, our view[2] could be summarized: God is infinitely holy and therefore cannot have relationship with that which is unholy (1 Sam 2:2; Ps 33:5; Hab 1:13). His perfect justice demands that sin be punished (Pss 9:8; 96:10, 13; Acts 17:31). The sin of the world was laid on Christ at the cross, and sin, therefore, does not prevent man from salvation (Isa 53; Rom 5:8; Heb 9:28; 1 Pet 2:24); however, since natural man still falls short of God's standard of holiness, he is separated from Him by default and is unable to do any work that could merit righteousness (Isa 64:6; Luke 19:10; John 3:19–21; Eph 2:12; Rom 1:18–3:20). Man is born spiritually dead and heading for eternal conscious torment in the Lake of Fire (John 3:18; 8:24; Eph 2:1; Rev 20:11–15), but the believer is saved from this end when He is given a second birth whereby God imputes Christ's righteousness to him when he fulfils the sole condition of believing in Christ for eternal life (John 3:3–18; Eph 2:4–9; Phil 3:9; Rom 3:22; Rev 21).

[2] ISBH members may differ in the specifics and scriptural support, but we are in significant agreement here.

By no means must a person agree with the ISBH doctrinal distinctives to be a FACA advocate, but there are a few points that should be addressed to clarify, more or less, where ISBH sits in Christendom as a whole and the FACA school of thought specifically. Some key topics are: the source and application of salvific merit, the definition of "faith," the distinction between phases of salvation, and dispensational eschatology.

On the source and application of salvific merit, one theologian puts it well, "A believer receives the gift of salvation not by what he or she did but by what *God* did. Believers then become stewards with the possibility and opportunity of doing good works—not to become saved, but because we are saved."[3] To say that believers become "stewards with the possibility and opportunity of doing good works" is a far cry from saying that stewards must do good works for final salvation.

Arthur Farstad served as Executive Editor of the New King James Version of the Bible and as co-editor of the Hodges-Farstad Majority Text of the New Testament and describes faith well:

> Oddly enough, the most important gospel word-family in the Greek NT is obscured in English. This is because we translate the Greek verb *pisteuō* by the AngloSaxon word *believe*, and the related noun p*istis* [sic] by the totally urelated word *faith* (from the Latin *fides*, by way of French)…
>
> Actually, *believe* and *faith*, as the Greek shows, are just the verb and the noun for a concept that is really no different in English than in Greek. That concept is *taking people at their word, trusting that what they say is true.*[4]

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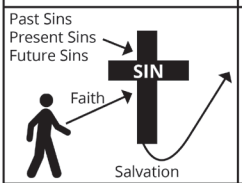
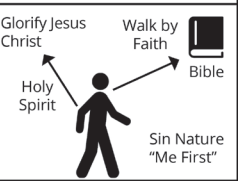
[3] Earl D. Radmacher, *Salvation* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 12–13.
[4] Arthur Farstad, "Faith Is Just Believing" in *Grace In Focus* (June, 1991), archived online at faithalone.org (accessed March 18, 2021).

In short, while some of the other views are described with skewed definitions, according to FACA, "Faith Alone" really means "Faith Alone" and "Christ Alone" really means "Christ Alone."

As for the phases of salvation, three could be codified: justification, sanctification, and glorification. These three terms are not restricted to soteriological uses, but they describe well three phases or aspects of salvation, each of which has vastly different criteria and results. Justification is salvation from the penalty of sin, and the only criterion is faith alone in Christ alone. Justification cannot be lost nor does it need to be maintained, so the rest of the Christian's life is in the second phase of sanctification, whereby the Christian should abide by daily dependence on the Holy Spirit. The final phase is glorification, which comes at the Christian's death or rapture. The following chart[5] depicts the phases graphically:

Justification Salvation from the Penalty of Sin	**Sanctification** Salvation from the Power of Sin	**Glorification** Salvation from the Presence of Sin
		
Faith Alone in Christ Alone	Dependence on the Holy Spirit	Through Death or by Rapture
Titus 3:5 Eph. 2:8–9 Luke 7:50 2 Tim. 1:9	2 Cor. 7:10 1 Tim. 4:16 James 1:21; 2:14; 5:20 Phil. 2:12–13	Rom. 5:9–10; 13:11 1 Cor. 3:15; 5:10 1 Thess. 4:13–18

[5] This chart is based on Dennis Rokser, *Salvation in Three Time Zones: Do You Understand the Three Tenses of Salvation?* (Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2013).

Salvation in the justification sense occurs in that first moment of belief in Christ, but sanctification (often spoken of in terms of abiding or discipleship), should occupy the Christian's life from then onward. Some soteriological schemes put the cart before the horse, such that discipleship becomes a condition for salvation. This often leaves honest Christians wondering if their discipleship is good enough to prove justification, but a positive consequence of FACA is that the believer can have assurance of his salvation. Instead of looking to his discipleship as a basis of his assurance, his assurance becomes a basis for his discipleship. One author rightly emphasizes the doctrine of assurance:

> Assurance isn't simply a comforting doctrine. It's foundational to discipleship. If we want to live a life that is pleasing to God, we must be sure we are His children and will remain so forever… It's imperative for the believer to know that he's unconditionally a member of God's family. Only with such knowledge is he able to grow and mature into the image of Jesus Christ.[6]

The believer no longer needs to fear condemnation, but while he is free from God's eternal punishment, this does not mean that he is exempt from temporal discipline.[7]

Finally, regarding dispensational eschatology, ISBH sees some key distinctions that are helpful for understanding FACA in light of passages that refer to the future. As dispensationalists, we recognize a distinction between the church (and God's promises to the church) and Israel (and God's promises to Israel). Spiritualizing the

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[6] Robert N. Wilkin, *Secure and Sure: Grasping the Promises of God* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2005), 48, 50.

[7] Kurt Witzig, "Distinguishing God's Punishment and His Discipline" in Dennis Rokser, Tom Stegall, and Kurt Witzig, *Should Christians Fear Outer Darkness?* (Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2015), 339–85.

Messianic Kingdom often causes theologians to compromise on the terms of the gospel for several reasons,[8] but one particular problem that is worth discussing here is that of General Judgment Theory. Dispensationalism acknowledges a distinction between the Judgment Seat of Christ, which is for rewarding believers based on their works, and the Great White Throne Judgment, which is the final judgment for unbelievers. General Judgment Theory has several biblical shortcomings[9] and they all stem from faulty hermeneutics, but basically, it combines these two judgments into one, such that believers and unbelievers have their works judged as a criterion at a final judgment. This is not to say that all FACA proponents agree on eschatology,[10] nor that they must reject General Judgment Theory. Once again, justification is through faith in *Christ*, not faith in *dispensationalism*. The hermeneutics that drives the distinction between the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Great White Throne is at the core of what ISBH is and it explains much of why we hold to FACA, but there is room for disagreement over the details of dispensational eschatology.

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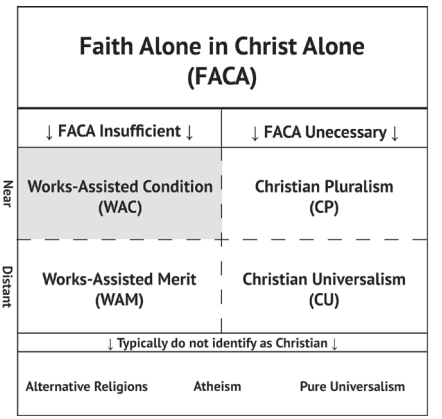
[8] For more information on this, see Andrew M. Woods, *The Coming Kingdom: What Is the Kingdom and How Is Kingdom Now Theology Changing the Focus of the Church?* (Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2016),379–86; Joseph Parle, *Dispensational Development and Departure: Comparing Classical, Essentialist, and Progressive Dispensational Models* (Lee's Summit, MO: Exegetica Publishing, 2020), 61–86.

[9] Samuel Hoyt, *The Judgment Seat of Christ: A Biblical and Theological Study* (Milwaukee: Grace Gospel Press, 2011), 17–32.

[10] Indeed, Vaughan Roberts has an entire book that spiritualizes the kingdom in ways that are far removed from anything that is compatible with dispensationalism. But, on pg. 137, he delivers a beautiful presentation of the three tenses of salvation that clearly expresses a past justification by faith alone in Christ alone. See Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 137.

THE LEFT: WORKS-ASSISTED CONDITION (WAC)

- Only Christ's works are meritorious
- Typically redefines "faith alone"
- Works typically serve as a sure sign of salvation or to retain salvation



The main disagreement between FACA and WAC is over the application of salvific merit. The WAC school has differing camps within itself, but they would agree that somehow or another man's good works are a condition for salvation.

The famous debate between Arminians and Calvinists is often a dispute over details that inevitably end in WAC nonetheless. To be clear, Arminians and Calvinists can hold to FACA,[11] but there are some versions of these systems that cross the line into WAC. A particularly popular systematic theology from the Wesleyan Arminian tradition has:

> Saving faith is vitally related to good works… Too frequently, Calvinists in their insistence upon salvation by faith only, have denied works, both as a merit and as a condition. Arminians deny the merit of

[11] For a third option that comes from a grammatical-historical perspective, see the chapter, "Why I am not a Calvinist… or an Arminian" in Christopher Cone, *The Sofa Rule: A Biblical Approach To God's Sovereignty And Human Responsibility* (Lee's Summit, MO: Exegetica Publishing, 2019), 97–122.

> good works but insist upon them as a condition of salvation. Mr. Wesley's formula was, "works, not as a merit, but as a condition."[12]

Arminians critique Calvinists for "their insistence upon salvation by faith only," but while there are indeed several FACA Calvinists, some more extreme Calvinists come to similar conclusions as extreme Arminians. These conclusions are often related to the doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints. To be clear, the doctrine of eternal security is biblical, but to say that God *preserves* the saints is different from saying that the saints must *persevere* in works to be saved. No Christian, if he is honest with himself, knows that he will persevere. While Calvinism advocates an unconditional election to salvation, many Calvinists will rest the assurance of their election on their own perseverance, rather than solely on Christ's promise.[13] These works are not viewed as meritorious, but the question, "Am I saved?" is not answered by pointing to Christ, but to self. The Arminian who rejects eternal security often has a similar answer to the same questions.[14] Some FACA advocates would say that growth will eventually follow salvation,[15] but they clarify that it is possible for a saved person to be carnal,[16] after all, this was certainly the case in Corinth and other biblical examples!

This is not to say that WAC believes that man's works are meritorious; WAC advocates agree that only Christ's works can purchase salvation and therefore they reject the notion of meritorious works.

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[12] Henry Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1952), 2:373.
[13] See Gordon Clark's comments on 1 John 2:3 in Gordon H. Clark, *First John: A Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1980).
[14] See Joseph Benson's comments on 1 John 2:3–6 in *Joseph Benson's Commentary of the Old and New Testaments* (New York: T. Carlton & J. Porter, 1857).
[15] Charles Ryrie, *So Great Salvation: What It Means to Believe in Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1997), 95.
[16] Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, 53–62.

In a counterpoints book on the role of works at the final judgment, an advocate for a WAC view responds to Michael Barber's presentation of the Roman Catholic WAM view:

> Barber apparently thinks he differs from me in maintaining that "good works" are "a criterion for salvation" …I am happy to say works are a criterion of salvation at the final judgment if what we mean is defined carefully. I would argue that they are an essential criterion in terms of evidence or fruit, but it is incorrect to say, against Barber, that they provide merit or are a basis of our salvation in any way… If the works aren't present, the person will be damned! That's a criterion! …What I object to, however, is the notion that the works are meritorious.[17]

It seems that WAC positions are self-contradictory: Works do not save, but there is no salvation without works.

The necessity of non-salvific works for salvation is a paradox that theologians often try to resolve by redefining "faith" to include works. For example, one Protestant with a PhD from the Roman Catholic University of Notre Dame redefines "faith" in a way that approaches the Catholic view of works, but without saying that the works themselves are meritorious:

> The Greek word *pistis*, generally rendered "faith" or "belief," as it pertains to Christian salvation, quite simply has little correlation with "faith" and "belief" as these words are generally understood and used in contemporary Christian culture, and much to do with *allegiance*. At the center of Christianity, properly understood, is not the

[17] Thomas Schreiner, "Response to Michael P. Barber" in *Four Views on the Role of Works at the Final Judgment* Alan Stanley, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 191–2.

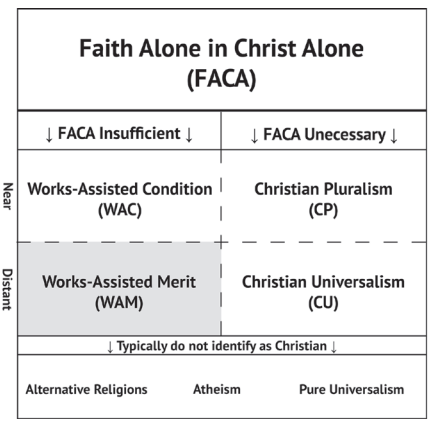
> human response of faith or belief but rather the old-fashioned term *fidelity*.[18]

Notice the blatant denial of the sufficiency of "faith" in Christ, as the word, "faith," is used in English. Even lexographers are susceptible to pushing theology into their work.[19]

Much literature and debate have been dedicated to responding to WAC. This is a near alternative to FACA, but the seemingly insignificant difference in wording ultimately can skew the Christian's view of God by shifting his confidence from Christ to self.

THE DISTANT LEFT: WORKS-ASSISTED MERIT (WAM)

- Christ's work is meritorious
- Man's work is also meritorious
- Salvation requires both merits
- Salvation not possible apart from works



[18] Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King*, (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2017). ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/manchester/detail.action?docID=4901252. Created from Manchester on 2020-12-01 21:11:25.

[19] Michael Makidon, "Soteriological Concerns with Bauer's Greek Lexicon," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 17:33 (Autumn 2004): 11–18.

The WAM views are on the same trajectory as WAC, but come to more distant conclusions on the alleged insufficiency of FACA. While both reject the *actual* "faith alone" message, WAM is more explicit. Naturally, there are similarities with WAC, as both are on the same side of the spectrum. Perhaps some of the similarities spur from the Roman Catholic roots of the Protestant Reformation, but there are still some clear distinctions between WAM and WAC that should be highlighted.

The Council of Trent outlines five causes of justification: final (*finalis*), effectual (*efficiens*), meritorious (*meritoria*), and instrumental (*instrumentalis*).[20] The instrumental cause is said to be the sacrament of baptism, which is a marked departure from WAC––much more from FACA––but it is the *causa meritoria* that is most complicated. The meritorious cause for justification is said to be Jesus and His work on the cross, which would be tempting to agree with, but the Roman Catholic understanding of justification does not come with a promise of eternal life. The Catechism divides justification by God's merit from attaining eternal life by man's merit:

> Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, *no one can merit the initial grace* of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, *we can then merit* for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life.[21]

For this reason, Roman Catholicism falls squarely in line with Works-Assisted *Merit*. The Roman Catholic does not suppose that

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[20] Council of Trent, 6.7.

[21] Catechism 2010. Accessed December 28, 2020, http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/para/2010.htm.

his merit alone saves him—Christ's merit is vital to the transaction––but as one Roman Catholic theologian summarizes, "It is the presence or absence of works that determines one's future destiny."[22]

Eastern Orthodoxy differs from Roman Catholicism on several key points of doctrine and practice while still adhering to the WAM school of thought. Eastern Orthodoxy and other groups[23] have a soteriology that is a process of *theosis*, or deification. Rather than Christ dying for men so that man can be saved by grace through faith, *theosis* has Christ becoming man so that man could strive to become like Him. One Eastern Orthodox scholar describes *theosis* in terms of process and mystery:

> Union with God is the goal of *theosis* and the content of salvation. It is attained as one learns how to die in the mystery of Christ in order to be raised up in newness of life... The path to *theosis* is the way of the cross, a journey of the soul into the mystery of Christ's death. There, a deeper mystery of resurrection and eternal life through union with God is discovered. This is the divine life of the Spirit... *Theosis* is therefore a process of transformation from death in the flesh to life in the divine.[24]

As a more antique example, the monk, John Climacus, wrote *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (ca. AD 600), which provides thirty metaphorical rungs of virtue for followers to climb to obtain salvation.

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[22] Michael P. Barber, "A Catholic Perspective: Our Works Are Meritorious at the Final Judgment because of our Union with Christ by Grace" in *Four Views on the Role of Works at the Final Judgment* Alan Stanley, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 168.
[23] Roger E. Olson, "Deification in Contemporary Theology" *Theology Today* 64:2 (July 1, 2007), 186–200.
[24] Kenneth Paul Wesche, "Eastern Orthodox spirituality: Union with God in Theosis" *Theology Today* 56:1 (Apr 1999): 29–30.

The treaty includes the aphorism, "marveling at the works of the saints is good; but emulating them is the cause of salvation."[25]

Unfortunately, WAM is found in Protestantism as well. Alexander Campbell, an early leader of the Restoration Movement, lists adoption, justification, and sanctification as consequents of baptism.[26] One Church of Christ minister writes, "Is work meritorious? Absolutely! It is correct that there is no justification by works done before one is saved by grace through faith; however, never will salvation be rewarded to those who haven't done good works after being justified."[27]

WAM has been the topic of much debate, especially in the centuries since the Reformation. We have here the examples of Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and the Church of Christ, but these are not alone in proclaiming WAM. Often Christian cults will hold to WAM, but these are too numerous to do justice here. In short, WAM conflicts with clear biblical teaching that salvation is through FACA and is an insult to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

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[25] *Ladder of Divine Ascent* 4.26 τὸ μὲν θαυμάζειν τοὺς ἁγιων πόνους καλόν· τὸ δὲ ζηλοῦν σωτηρίας πρόξενον·.

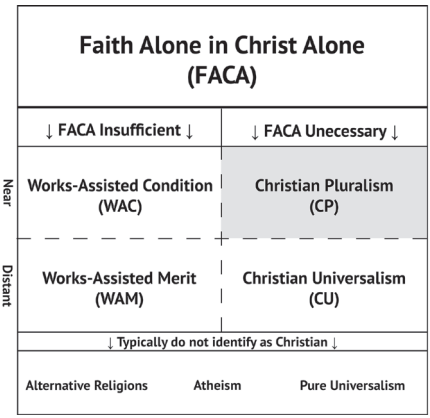
[26] Alexander Campbell, *Christian Baptism—Its Antecedents and Consequents* (Bethany, VS: Alexander Campbell, 1851), 274–312.

[27] Minky Chang, "Is Work Meritorious," Buford Church of Christ, July 23, 2020, accessed December 29, 2020, https://www.bufordcoc.com/is-work-meritorius2/.

Icon of the Ladder of Divine Ascent (late 12th century)
Saint Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai

THE RIGHT: CHRISTIAN PLURALISM (CP)

- Only Christ's works are meritorious
- Typically redefines "Christ alone"
- Faith typically can be either in Christ
- alone or in self along with Christ



The left side of the chart (WAC and WAM) diminishes the sufficiency of faith in Christ while the right side of the chart (CP and CU) diminishes the necessity of faith in Christ. CP and WAC have much in common with each other, being near alternatives to FACA. Often our differences with near alternatives boil down to semantic arguments. While WAC compromises the message of "*faith* in Christ," CP compromises the message of "faith in *Christ*." Both camps may repeat the five solae, but just as WAC redefines the terms to make them fit, CP does likewise.

In so many words, CP teaches that everyone under the umbrella of Christendom––all Calvinists, Arminians, FACA advocates, Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.––are all essentially teaching the same thing, and so we are all one body of Christ. Different CP advocates draw the line differently, such that some will not include Catholics while others might even include Mormons. But in the end, regardless of how the individual defines the saving message, it does not require someone to believe in *Christ alone* for eternal life and instead accepts the possibility that someone can be saved by trusting *his works* to some extent instead.

One theologian correctly submits:

> Claiming to be a Christian does not make one a Christian. Nor does being a nice person and living a moral life. The proof of salvation is believing the gospel: that is, knowing that one has eternal life because Jesus guarantees it to all who believe in Him.[28]

Does this mean that Catholics, Adventists, Church of Christ members, etc., cannot be saved? Of course not. Even an atheist, Muslim, or Scientologist can be saved by believing in Christ, but at the moment in which someone believes in *Christ*, he is rejecting the doctrines of Catholicism, Adventism, Islam, Scientology, and every other false gospel or religion that rejects the sufficiency and necessity of Christ.

Christians agree that there should be unity in the body of Christ, and it is agreed that there are many challenges to Christian unity. The Emergent Church critique has merit when it says that "Part of the challenge in maintaining visible unity among Christian communities is connected to the pervasive individualism in society that leads not only to personal individualism and the notion of the autonomous self but also to a sectarian individualism with respect to the church,"[29] but the problem lies in the broadening of the definition of "church" to include non-salvific views. This shifts into an epistemological problem, such that the word of God is usurped in favour of a postmodern plurality of truth.

Anti-unity is not only division on the inside, but also unity with the outside. For example, a famous American Christian Pluralist pastor appeared on CNN during a presidential election in which Mitt

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[28] Robert N. Wilkin, *Confident in Christ: Living by Faith Really Works* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 185.
[29] John Franke, *Manifold Witness: The Plurality of Truth* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 128–9.

Romney, a Mormon, was a leading candidate. The pastor was asked how he would respond if a congregant expressed concern that Mormons are not Christians to which he responded:

> Well, my personal view is, Wolf, if when I hear Mitt Romney say that he believes that Jesus is the Son of God, that He's the Christ, raised from the dead, that He's his Savior, that's good enough for me... I believe they are a believer in Christ [sic]... Mormonism is a little bit different, but I still see them as brothers in Christ.[30]

Other Christian Pluralists may be more restrictive than this example, but just as Mormonism redefines "Christ" (among other things), Christian Pluralism redefines "believer in Christ," to include those who do not believe in *Christ*, sometimes to the extent that it includes Mormons.

Christian Pluralism is distinct from (though, often accepts adherents of) Religious Pluralism and Syncretism.[31] It is also distinct from (but often the root soteriology of) Ecumenism. It is *not* pluralism when the Russian Orthodox Metropolitan Hilarion says:

> The Church should seek allies in the work of protecting traditional values…. Much can be done here between Eastern Orthodox and Catholics, and even, to a certain extent, Christians and Muslims. Family, childbearing, the right to life for all people, even counting those

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[30] "Joel Osteen talks religion & politics," CNN, April 4, 2012, accessed December 7, 2020, https://edition.cnn.com/videos/bestoftv/2012/04/24/exp-tsr-osteen-intv.cnn.

[31] This distinction is particularly relevant when considering the theology of John Mbiti, E. Bọlaji Idowu, Kwame Bediako, and others who could be going beyond the limits of Scripture in proclaiming the merits of traditional African religions as a preparation for the Gospel. For an engagement of these views, especially of Bediako's, and a more Pauline alternative, see Vhumani Magezi and Christopher Magezi, 2016, "Soteriology on the interface of traditional African religion and Christianity: Engaging Bediako's soteriology and a soteriological alternative," *In die Skriflig* 50(1) 2016, a2068.http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v50i1.2068

> who are not yet born, the positions of traditional confessions are close enough for these questions… we are not arguing about whether or not God exists; we are arguing over the place of man in the world and the future of the human community.[32]

To the extent that Ecumenism is oriented toward social issues, it is not a soteriological issue per se, but clear priorities must be established to prevent mistaking unity over non-salvific issues for being one in the body of Christ. Indeed, soteriological differences have been a hindrance to the Ecumenical Movement, so it is not uncommon for Ecumenists to appeal to Christian Pluralism to overcome the soteriological barriers.[33]

Even Evangelicalism, which has defended certain key doctrines from the attacks of liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, tends to be vulnerable to CP as it has made unfortunate compromises, especially in the names of unity and justice.[34] One example of evangelical CP is seen in The Lausanne Covenant.[35] It has been estimated that "85% of mission organizations in Latin America use The Lausanne Covenant as their statement of faith."[36] The Lausanne Covenant affirms eternal separation from God for those who reject Christ,[37] so it is not promoting CU, but it is unclear what exactly the covenant accepts

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[32] Иларион Алфеев, "Позитивная программа Церкви — это спасение людей" *Фома* № 6 (74) июнь 2009, accessed December 7, 2020, https://foma.ru/arxiepiskop-ilarion-alfeev-pozitivnaya-programma-czerkvi-eto-spasenie-lyudej.html. Translation mine.

[33] See especially Dagmar Heller's comments in the interview, "Christian Ecumenism Today: Crisis or Transformation?" *Государство, религия, церковь в России и за рубежом* 35:1 (2017), 302–12.

[34] Gary Gilley, *The Social Justice Primer: In Search of the Message and Mission of the Church*, (Springfield, IL: Think on These Things Ministries, 2019), loc. 56–196, Kindle.

[35] The Lausanne Covenant is available online at the Lausanne Movement's website, accessed December 22, 2020, https://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant.

[36] Quote attributed to David Ruiz at https://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant (accessed December 22, 2020).

[37] *The Lausanne Covenant*, article 3.

as Christian. The Covenant, which was framed in 1974, has stated, "More than 2,700 million people, which is more than two-thirds of all humanity, have yet to be evangelized."[38] This figure undoubtedly includes Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. Indeed, in more recent writings, the Lausanne Movement has treated the Reformation as a church division that is to be mourned, not because there are Catholics in need of salvation, but because caused disunity in the body of Christ, which should be united for evangelism.[39]

Another semantics slight to beware of is the broadening of the term, "gospel." While dispensationalism seeks to rightly divide the various messages of good news throughout the Bible,[40] an opposing trend reconstructs evangelistic terminology and methodology by recontextualizing multiple gospels, sometimes even including gospels that are entirely foreign to Scripture. In a recent dissertation[41] to help a major evangelical ministry seek "to determine what constitutes effective and even culturally appropriate approaches to evangelism in the twenty-first century,"[42] an influential missiologist proposes that the gospel should involve, among other things, "restoration, the inclusion of all people—rich and poor, outcasts and foreigners, and empowerment, liberation, and deliverance for the disenfranchised... the good news includes God's presence in suffering now and the promise

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[38] *The Lausanne Covenant*, article 9.

[39] See, for example, Thomas Albert Howard, "A Call to Christian Unity for the Sake of the Great Commission" in *Lausanne Global Analysis*, 6:6 (November 2017). Available online at https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2017-11/call-christian-unity-sake-great-commission (accessed December 12, 2020).

[40] For a classic example, see chapter 21, "The Four Gospels" in Clarence Larkin, *Dispensational Truth or God's Plan and Purpose in the Ages* Enlarged and Revised Ed. (Philadelphia: Rev. Clarence Larkin Est., 1920).

[41] Cas Monaco, "Bill Bright's (1921–2003) *Four Spiritual Laws* Reimagined: A Narrative Approach to Meaningful Gospel Conversations for an American Twenty-First-Century Secularized Context" PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020 available online at https://search.proquest.com/openview/003724e24648323cfe181794e656b5b1/1.pdf (accessed December 23, 2020).

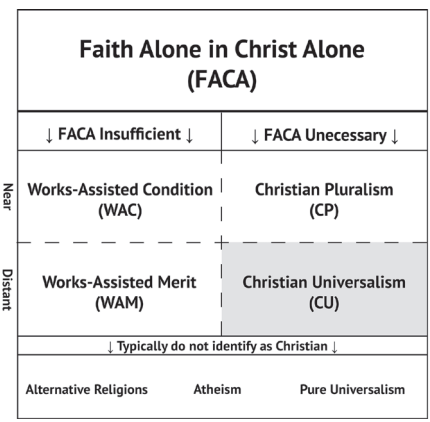
[42] Monaco, "Bill Bright's *Four Spiritual Laws* Reimagined," 3.

of eternal life."[43] Note the broadening of the message from the promise of eternal life to include liberation. This is not just a call to defend traditional marriage, but rather reinforces long-held evangelistic partnerships with the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine, as well as employment of missionaries with aberrant theology.[44]

Difficulties ensue when delineating CP, but this section hopes to establish the general barriers of what constitutes a Christian Pluralist and to identify some intersections where pluralistic ideology permeates Christendom. CP is to be rejected because it compromises the exclusivity of the biblical gospel and allows for other ways of salvation besides FACA. CP thrives when (but is by no means excluded to when) the Gospel is downplayed or redefined in social terms, which opens the floodgates to inappropriate unity.

THE DISTANT RIGHT: CHRISTIAN UNIVERSALISM (CU)

- Man does not inherently lack merit
- Only Christian God is legitimate
- Everyone will be with Christian God in
- eternity regardless of faith in life



[43] Monaco, "Bill Bright's *Four Spiritual Laws* Reimagined," 9.
[44] This is based on personal conversations and correspondence with Cru staff based in Eastern and Central Europe.

Pluralism implies exclusivity, so a more extreme rejection of the necessity of FACA is CU, which concludes that everyone eventually will be saved. This may sound friendly on the surface, but the Biblicist should find a closer examination to be unsettling. CU comes in too many forms to address every possibility, so a few common examples of CU and its ramifications follow.

CU was first clearly pronounced by Clement of Alexandria (AD 150–215)[45] and from its earliest days, proponents were proclaiming other heterodox views to the extent that the Fifth Ecumenical Council (AD 553) declared several anathemas against early universalists. Honest proponents of CU admit to its shady history.[46] Responding to CU can be difficult since it is a moving target,[47] as one universalist puts it, "Throughout Christian history, but most especially since the seventeenth century, universalism keeps being 'reinvented.'"[48]

The ramifications of CU are greater than they may seem because the processes that support Universalism often inflict damage to a host of doctrines along the way. For example, some theologians

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[45] See Tom Greggs, "Apokatastasis: Particularist Universalism in Origen (c. 185–c. 254)" in *All Shall be Well: Explorations in Universal Salvation and Christian Theology, from Origen to Moltmann*, Gregory Macdonald, ed. (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, James Clarke & Co Ltd., 2011), 29–46.

[46] See Gregory Macdonald, "Introduction: Between Heresy and Dogma" in *All Shall be Well: Explorations in Universal Salvation and Christian Theology, from Origen to Moltmann*, Gregory Macdonald, ed. (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, James Clarke & Co Ltd., 2011), 1–25.

[47] Another difficulty is the term itself. "Christian Universalism" is often used in reference to neoliberal inclusivity, which deals less with soteriology and more with ecclesiology. See, for example, the verbiage in Melissa E. Sanchez, "Transdevotion: Race, Gender, and Christian Universalism" *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 19:4 (2019): 94–98, doi:10.1353/jem.2019.0039.

[48] Gregory Macdonald, "Introduction: Between Heresy and Dogma" in *All Shall be Well: Explorations in Universal Salvation and Christian Theology, from Origen to Moltmann*, Gregory Macdonald, ed. (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, James Clarke & Co Ltd., 2011), 15.

spiritualize "hell," such that it is a current kingdom and experience,[49] in order to open the floodgates for annihilationism or CU. This move can easily slip into Christological errors relating to the cross; such is the case with Jeremy Myers, a CU proponent[50] who is respected within certain evangelical circles. With an agenda to demonstrate that "God will not separate Himself from anyone in eternity,"[51] Myers begins by spiritualizing hell and along the way denies substitutionary atonement[52] and even goes as far as to interpret "Christ's descent into hell as the story of the Incarnation into 'this present darkness.'"[53]

Just as WAC and CP have similarities as near alternatives to FACA, so also WAM and CU have similar tendencies as distant alternatives. WAM, especially in higher liturgy forms such as Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, tends to shift authority from Scripture to ecclesiastical bodies. These organizations change the meaning of "salvation" and diminish Christ's role by shifting some of the burden of merit onto man, thus rendering FACA insufficient. CU also tends to shift authority away from Scripture, but typically in liberal directions that redefine the terms of "salvation," diminish Christ's person and work, and ultimately render FACA unnecessary.

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[49] For example, see Bradley Jersak, "Hell is a Kingdom: the Missing Motif Reconstructed" *Clarian Journal for Religion, Peace & Justice* (Dec. 18, 2015), accessed December 31, 2020, https://www.clarion-journal.com/files/hell-is-a-kingdom-4.pdf.

[50] Myers has that his view is more closely related to Traditionalism (Eternal Conscious Torment) than Universalism on the grounds that he believes that the eternal experience will be hindered when someone rejects Christ. This is a false alignment. Myers clearly holds that everyone will be with God and this is Universalism, even if there are degrees of experience in eternity. Jeremy Myers, *What is Hell? The Truth About Hell and How to Avoid It* (Dallas, OR: Redeeming Press, 2019), 356, Kindle.

[51] Jeremy Myers, *What is Hell? The Truth About Hell and How to Avoid It* (Dallas, OR: Redeeming Press, 2019), 352, Kindle.

[52] Jeremy Myers, "Good Questions About the Death of Jesus that Make no Sense" Redeeming God, available online at https://redeeminggod.com/good-questions-make-no-sense/ (accessed December 31, 2020).

[53] The quote is Bradley Jersak's paraphrase of Jeremy Myers' view in the forward of Jeremy Myers, *What is Hell? The Truth About Hell and How to Avoid It* (Dallas, OR: Redeeming Press, 2019), 221, Kindle.

What may seem to be a disagreement over soteriology or even eschatology is often a result of an earlier, more fundamental disagreement over the nature of God's holy writ. One CU proponent admits, "Because I do not regard Scripture as infallible on any interpretation, I do not feel bound to translate into theological assertion some of the apocalyptic imagery and plot lines of the New Testament."[54] Having lowered the authority of Scripture, she then elevates the authority of feelings, by writing that "feelings are highly relevant to the problem of evil and to the problem of hell, because they are one source of information about how bad something is for a person. To be sure, they are not an infallible source... but they are *a* source."[55] It becomes difficult to reason with CU proponents exegetically when the Bible, the only source of exegetical material, comes under siege. Just as one does not need to grant authority to an ecclesiological body to suppose WAM, it is not necessary to reject inerrancy to land in CU; however, CU is not consistent with grammatical-historical hermeneutics, so there must be some hermeneutical shift, and the shift often relates to inerrancy.

Modern liberation theology has roots in Roman Catholic WAM missiology[56] and, as already observed, can lead to CP when applied to Evangelicalism, but when presupposed by liberal theology, it becomes suitable for CU eschatology. Such is the case with Martin Luther King Jr., an American Baptist and liberation theologian whose theology begins with a low view of Scripture[57] that frequent-

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[54] Marilyn McCord Adams, "The Problem of Hell: A Problem of Evil for Christians" in *Reasoned Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, Eleonore Stump, ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 325.

[55] Adams, "The Problem of Hell," 326.

[56] Monaco "Bill Bright's *Four Spiritual Laws* Reimagined," 173–5.

[57] See, for example, Martin Luther King Jr. "Light on the Old Testament from the Ancient Near East" in *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume I: Called to Serve, January 1929-June 1951* Clayborne Carson, Ralph Luker, and Penny A. Russell, eds. (Los Angeles: University of California Press at Berkley, 1992), 162–180.

ly justifies forced typologies[58] and leads to a rejection of substitutionary atonement[59] and a further rejection of "the divine sonship of Jesus, the virgin birth, and the bodily resurrection,"[60] as well as a redefinition of hell into a current reality.[61] King differs from Myers et al. in that King has an agenda of liberation theology, so his form of CU sees salvation as the emergence of a universal "Beloved Community"[62] when man and God together will rid the world of evil.[63] To King, the second coming of Christ, the day of judgment, immortality, and the kingdom of God are all spiritual representations of this

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[58] See, for example, Sunggu Yang, "An other-typological illustration of the Exodus story according to Dr King's perception of universal reconciliation in his sermon on Exodus 14:30" *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* [Online], 72:2 (24 November 2016), accessed December 31, 2020, https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/3253/8893.

[59] Martin Luther King Jr. "A View of the Cross Possessing Biblical and Spiritual Justification" in *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume I: Called to Serve, January 1929-June 1951* Clayborne Carson, Ralph Luker, and Penny A. Russell, eds. (Los Angeles: University of California Press at Berkley, 1992), 263–267.

[60] Martin Luther King Jr. "What Experiences of Christians Living in the Early Christian Century Led to the Christian Doctrines of the Divine Sonship of Jesus, the Virgin Birth, and the Bodily Resurrection" in *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume I: Called to Serve, January 1929-June 1951* Clayborne Carson, Ralph Luker, and Penny A. Russell, eds. (Los Angeles: University of California Press at Berkley, 1992), 225–30.

[61] Martin Luther King Jr., "What Happened To Hell?" in *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume VI: Advocate of the Social Gospel, September 1948 – March 1963* Clayborne Carson, Susan Carson, Susan Englander, Troy Jackson, and Gerald L. Smith, eds. (Los Angeles: University of California Press at Berkeley, 2007), 411.

[62] Rufus Burrow writes that the term, "the Beloved Community" comes from Josiah Royce, who originally called it, "the Universal Community." Rufus Burrow, God and Human Dignity: The Personalism, Theology, and Ethics of Martin Luther King, Jr. (Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 162, cited by Jacob W. Kines Jr., Setting the Captors Free: Soteriology in the Thought and Praxis of Martin Luther King, Jr. PhD diss., University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology, 2014, 157, accessed December 31, 2020, https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/339/.

[63] Martin Luther King Jr., "Draft of Chapter XV, 'The Answer to a Perplexing Question'" in *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume VI: Advocate of the Social Gospel, September 1948 – March 1963* Clayborne Carson, Susan Carson, Susan Englander, Troy Jackson, and Gerald L. Smith, eds. (Los Angeles: University of California Press at Berkeley, 2007), 545–55.

future society that is governed by love.[64] This eschatological scheme of universalism is apparent in the conclusion of King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech:

> …we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"[65]

One scholar of King's soteriology summarizes, "In the final analysis, his solution to the problem of evil in the world was rooted in his Christology."[66] Such is true of all Christian theologians, but it happens that CU often results from Christological doctrines that are rightfully classified as "strange teachings" (Heb 13:9).

A more extreme example might be Unitarian Universalism, which boasts of Protestant roots, but has evolved into "a non-creedal faith, in which individual members are free to pursue religious truth from any source."[67] This religion totters on the border of Pure Universalism, which is not properly Christendom, though many Unitarian Universalists consider themselves Christians, so the line becomes blurry.

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64 Martin Luther King Jr. "The Christian Pertinence of Eschatological Hope" in *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume I: Called to Serve, January 1929-June 1951* Clayborne Carson, Ralph Luker, and Penny A. Russell, eds. (Los Angeles: University of California Press at Berkley, 1992), 268–73.

65 Martin Luther King Jr., "I Have a Dream by Martin Luther King, Jr; August 28, 1963." *The Avalon Project*, Yale Law School, accessed December 31, 2020, Avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/mlk01.asp.

66 Jacob W. Kines Jr., Setting the Captors Free: Soteriology in the Thought and Praxis of Martin Luther King, Jr. PhD diss., University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology, 2014, 206, accessed December 31, 2020https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/339/.

67 Andrea Greenwood and Mark W. Harris, *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 167.

This is an overview of some influential forms of CU, but there are many others. Suffice to say that it fits best on a theologically liberal framework. The bottom line of CU is that everyone will eventually spend eternity with the Christian God (though the Christian God may be vastly redefined in some CU circles). CU is to be rejected, not only for its conclusions, but also for the liberal methodologies that usually cause the conclusions.

OTHER PERSPECTIVES

The average Christian is a kaleidoscope of contradicting ideas. A Pew Research poll shows that in the UK, Protestants are more likely than Catholics to say that both good deeds and faith in God are necessary to get into heaven.[68] The same study has seventy-eight percent of German Christians saying that Catholics and Protestants today are religiously more similar than different.[69] This is Germany, home of the Protestant Reformation! The causes for confusion are a matter of speculation, but certainly many underlying problems exist. Biblical illiteracy is certainly a factor and this happens to be an area where ISBH strives to help. While the quadrant model helps diagnose a person's soteriological perspective, it will only hinder the discussion if it is assumed that everyone applies a rigid mode of consistent thought. A few tips are in order to help evangelists properly understand those who do not quite fit into any particular quadrant.

Many Christians combine the errors of multiple perspectives. An example could be a position that merges WAC or WAM with points from CP to say that all *good* Catholics, Baptists, and Adventists

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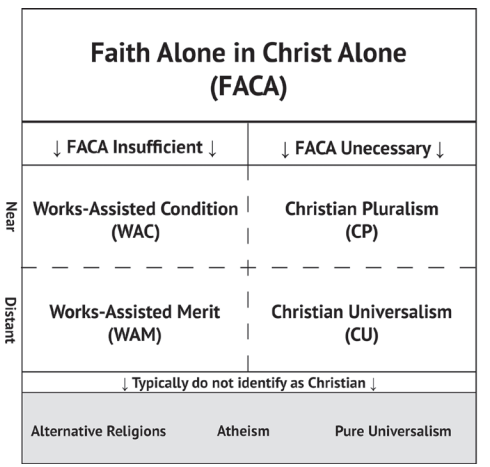
[68] Pew Research Center, "Five Centuries After Reformation, Catholic-Protestant Divide in Western Europe Has Faded," (August 31, 2017), 10.
[69] Pew Research Center, "Five Centuries After Reformation, Catholic-Protestant Divide in Western Europe Has Faded," (August 31, 2017), 4.

are saved, but all *bad* Catholics, Baptists, and Adventists are not, or perhaps even that all *good* Muslims and Jews are saved, but all *bad* Muslims and Jews are condemned, as well as all atheists and Hindus. The process is a liberal one and thereby most similar to CU, but the conclusions are everywhere except CU on the spectrum. An evangelical discussion with someone of this ilk may be more fruitful if it addresses the process and not only the result.

It should also be noted that ecclesiological bodies are not always internally consistent. Eastern Orthodoxy is a WAM perspective, but the orthodox priest, Sergey Bulgakov writes, "All people belong to the humanity of Christ, and if this humanity is the Church, as the Body of Christ, then in this sense all of humanity belongs to the Church."[70] This is not a combination of WAM and CU, but rather an Eastern Orthodox abandonment of WAM in favour of CU, while still maintaining other Orthodox doctrines and practices.



[70] «Всѣ люди принадлежатъ къ человѣчеству Христову, и если эта человѣчность есть Церковь, какъ Тѣло Христову, то въ этомъ смыслѣ и все человѣчество принадлежит Церкви». Прот. Сергій Булгаковъ, *Невѣста Агнца: О богочеловѣчествѣ* Часть III (Парижъ: YMCA Press, 1945), 290.

Pure Universalism would have that all people are saved but that Christ is not the universal Saviour. Pure Universalism comes in many forms, but often there is an eschatologically redeeming element as in CU. For example, Aldous Huxley proposes that "there is a Law or Dharma which must be obeyed, a Tao or Way which must be followed, if men are to achieve their final end"[71] with the caveat that everyone eventually meets this final end, so failure to obey does not lead to damnation, but rather "to a deeper enslavement to misery and evil, to a prolongation of our existence in the likeness of angry apes."[72] Pure Universalism is related to CU, but differences should be noted for unhindered discussion to ensue.

Religious Pluralism is similar to Pure Universalism, but distinct in that pluralism excludes somebody. For example, Rabbinic Judaism leans toward pluralism following the Talmud, that "The Rabbis taught the Seven Laws of the Sons of Noah, concerning: judgment, and blessing the Name, idolatry, uncovering nakedness, and pouring out blood, and robbery, and tearing limbs from living beings."[73] Jewish concepts of salvation and the afterlife are obscure and numerous, but Jews generally agree that salvation is available through other religions and that many will not obtain salvation, so this is an example of Religious Pluralism.

Alternative religions and atheism reject the Bible as it stands. Neither would self-identify as Christian, so an analysis of such worldviews would be beyond the thrust of this study, which is to present in broad terms a quadrant model of four soteriological compromises within Christendom.

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[71] Aldous Huxley, "The Minimum Working Hypothesis" in *Vedanta For the Western World*, Christopher Isherwood, ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1949), 34.
[72] Aldous Huxley, "Man and Reality" in *Vedanta For the Western World*, Christopher Isherwood, ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1949), 274.
[73] תנו רבנן שבע מצות נצטוו בני נח דינין וברכת השם ע"ז גילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים וגזל ואבר מן החי Sanhedrin, 56a:24.

Occasionally, someone may hold to an odd doctrine that confuses diagnostics. For example, annihilationism, which teaches that the unsaved will cease to exist, is often misunderstood as being CU, since it holds that nobody will be in the Lake of Fire for eternity. The unitarian[74] Christadelphian cult teaches that the unsaved will be annihilated[75] if they fail to store up salvific merit[76] so it properly falls within the bounds of WAM, not CU. Another difficulty might be that someone may keep silent about his views or live with incompatible strands of doctrine without ever resolving the inconsistencies. Such is particularly common following neo-orthodoxy[77] but certainly extends to other traditions as well.

CONCLUSION

Satan will not tire in his assault on the gospel. The model presented here does not pretend to classify everyone who claims to be a Christian into one of four options, nor are the quadrants the only alternatives to FACA. This quadrant model is presented, not to oversimplify complex issues, but rather to assist readers in identifying soteriological compromises so that they will be better equipped to urge unbelievers to believe in Christ alone for eternal life. May He receive uncompromised glory in our evangelism!

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[74] Mark Vincent, *Life's Biggest Questions* (Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian, 2016), 70–73.
[75] Vincent, *Life's Biggest Questions*, 97.
[76] Vincent, 97.
[77] Oliver Crisp "'I Do Teach It, but I Also Do Not Teach It': The Universalism of Karl Barth (1886-1968)" in *All Shall be Well: Explorations in Universal Salvation and Christian Theology, from Origen to Moltmann*, Gregory Macdonald, ed. (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, James Clarke & Co Ltd., 2011), 305–24.

2
The Lordship Salvation Conundrum: Regeneration Prior To Faith

David James

INTRODUCTION

A defining characteristic of the Lordship Salvation view could be arguably reduced to the single question: "What constitutes saving faith?" Strong Lordship proponents, such as John MacArthur, would answer that question with: "…the **message of salvation includes a call to surrender**[1] to Jesus as Lord. Those who would come to Him for salvation must be willing to acquiesce to His sovereign authority."[2]

In his message, "It will cost you everything," Steven Lawson put it this way: "...**none of you can be a true Christian** — none of you can be in my kingdom — none of you can be in right relationship with me or the Father — none of you can be my disciple **who does not give up all his own possessions**."[3] In other words, bound up in the Lordship definition of saving faith is the willingness to surrender to the Lordship of Christ and submit to His authority. Such a decision,

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[1] All formatting for emphasis throughout is my own.
[2] John F. MacArthur. *The Gospel According to Jesus: What Is Authentic Faith?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), loc. 215, Kindle.
[3] Steve Lawson. "It will cost you everything," accessed on Feb. 1, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JQOBMi4QS8.

essentially a promise to a life of obedience and good works, is a necessary requisite for salvation according to the Lordship paradigm.

This understanding of the gospel presumes that the unregenerate person has the capacity to make such a decision–to effectively promise the Lord that he will live for Him unconditionally, and on the basis of exercising that *kind* of faith, in return for this commitment, the Lord will save him.

At this point, it is worth noting that Arminianism holds something approximating the Lordship view of salvation. This is logically consistent given the Arminian view of man's natural ability to freely respond to God in accepting or rejecting the offer of salvation.

However, the Lordship label is generally reserved for those who are also five-point Calvinists. Therefore, the primary focus of this chapter will be on the Calvinist version of Lordship Salvation and how it fundamentally changes the gospel of Jesus Christ into something other than salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated that the demands of the Lordship Salvation view are illogical, misleading, and confusing within a fully Calvinist framework––leading to a self-defeating conundrum––and even worse, a modern-day form of Pharisaism.

REFORMED THEOLOGY: TOTAL DEPRAVITY

There is a broad tendency among conservative dispensational Evangelicals to self-identify as *Calvinist* or as *Calvinistic* at least partly because of Dispensationalism's Reformed and Presbyterian heritage. However, in today's theological climate, to be a *Calvinist* generally means to be a *five-point Calvinist* – that is, one who holds to all five points of the T-U-L-I-P acronym: **T**otal Depravity, **U**nconditional Election, **L**imited Atonement, **I**rresistible Grace, and **P**erseverance of the Saints.

It is probably safe to say that most dispensationalists hold to unlimited atonement, and so the majority would consider themselves to be four-point Calvinists at most or, perhaps better, Calvinistic. However, the five points of Calvinism form a unified system because of the interdependence of the points. Consequently, dropping any given point ultimately requires that any remaining points be slightly redefined in such a way that they no longer mean precisely what they do to the full Calvinist.

Therefore, it may be better for those who are not five-point Calvinists to simply abandon Calvinistic labels altogether. For example, 3- or 4-point Calvinists tend to retain the *Total Depravity* label for man's condition––even though they don't precisely hold to the five-point Calvinist version because it is not biblically accurate.

To fully understand the five-point Calvinist view of Total Depravity, multiple sources need to be considered because of a certain lack of uniformity among Reformed theologians. The Ligonier website explains the relationship between Original Sin and Total Depravity.

> The doctrine of total depravity reflects the Reformed viewpoint of original sin. That term **original sin** is often misunderstood in the popular arena. Some people assume that the term original sin must refer to the first sin…Rather, the doctrine of original sin defines the consequences to the human race because of that first sin.[4]

In *What is Reformed Theology?* R.C. Sproul defines Total Depravity in this way:

> The term total depravity, as distinguished from utter depravity, refers to the effect of sin and corruption on the whole person. To be

[4] Accessed 12/28/20, https://www.ligonier.org/blog/tulip-and-reformed-theology-total-depravity/.

totally depraved is to suffer from corruption that pervades the whole person. Sin affects every aspect of our being: the body, the soul, the mind, the will, and so forth. The total or whole person is corrupted by sin.[5]

James White suggests additional terminology to describe what it means to be *totally depraved*:

Some Reformed writers like other names for this doctrine. One of the best alternatives (that even maintains the "TULIP" acrostic) is "**total inability**." This refers to the results of sin, especially in relationship to spiritual things. It speaks to the fact that the Bible teaches that **man is incapable of doing what is right, pure, and good** in God's eyes, since man is in sin.[6]

W.G.T. Shedd explains:

In the Reformed tradition, total depravity does not mean utter depravity. We often use the term total as a synonym for utter or for completely, so the notion of total depravity conjures up the idea that every human being is as bad as that person could possibly be…So the idea of total in total depravity doesn't mean that all human beings are as wicked as they can possibly be. It means that the fall was so serious that it affects the whole person…We are enslaved to the evil impulses and desires of our hearts. The body, the mind, the will, the spirit—indeed, the whole person—have been infected by the power of sin.[7]

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[5] R. C. Sproul, *What is Reformed Theology?: Understanding the Basics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), loc. 1577, Kindle.
[6] James R. White, *The Sovereign Grace of God: A Biblical Study of the Doctrines of Calvinism* (Lindenhurst, NY: Great Christian Books), 48, loc. 47, Kindle.
[7] Accessed 12/27/20, https://www.ligonier.org/blog/tulip-and-reformed-theology-total-depravity/.

The Monergism.com website succinctly states the consequence of Total Depravity:

> Because of the fall, **man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel**. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature; therefore, he will not--indeed he cannot--choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. **Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ**--it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. **Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation**--it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.[8]

In other words, Total Depravity as defined by five-point Calvinists necessitates the corollary that regeneration precedes faith. Before dealing with the matter of regeneration preceding faith, Total Depravity will be examined in light of relevant biblical passages.

A BIBLICAL RESPONSE: TOTAL DEPRAVITY OR SPIRITUALLY DEAD?

Much of the above concerning Total Depravity is generally biblical in describing the unregenerate person's spiritual condition––as far as it goes. Additional theological deductions fail to fully account for other Scriptures that contradict their conclusions.

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[8] Accessed 12/31/20, https://www.monergism.com/topics/doctrines-grace/five-points-calvinism?fbclid=IwAR2faT2pz3I1r0_lDQkhObTGLoqohoOragBIMbP8-x9ff66SK2zYHkXcw-g.

It is always better to stay as close as possible to precise biblical terminology rather than coining terms based on theological deductions––which is what Total Depravity is. Using biblical terminology regarding the unregenerate man, we find over and over again that he is *spiritually dead*:

> And you He made alive, who **were dead in trespasses and sins**, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience (Eph 2:1–2).[9]
>
> But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when **we were dead in trespasses,** made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) (Eph 2:4–5).
>
> And you, **being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh**, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses (Col 2:13).

The first theological concept that needs to be considered is death. The broad consensus among conservative Evangelicals is that death means separation––which is fundamentally different from ceasing to exist or even consciousness. For example, when humans die, their physical body ceases to function, but their spirit does not. The spirit continues to be conscious and aware throughout eternity––and so death is the separation of the soul/spirit from the body.

Adam became spiritually separated from God the moment he ate of the forbidden fruit––thus he "died" as warned by God would happen. He didn't become unconscious. He remained very much aware of God and His nature. But he was separated from the life of God that had been sustaining him both spiritually and physically––the former

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[9] Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotes in this chapter are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982).

relationship between them had been broken. This separation from the life of God was immediate, with the further consequence being that Adam's body began a dying process that lasted for 930 years (cf. Gen 5:9) ending in the separation of his soul/spirit from his physical body.

At the same time, being embarrassed and ashamed, Adam tried to hide himself from the presence of God. He retained the presence of mind and enough spiritual understanding to comprehend the magnitude of his sin to at least some degree. Consequently, Adam tried to hide from the Lord. In His grace, the Lord sacrificed the first animal to provide the first temporary blood covering which He offered as a gift to Adam. Adam apparently had the capacity to accept this gift of a covering, first in his mind by faith and then actually. This clothing served as a reminder of the restored fellowship that God had provided for through an atoning sacrifice––a clear foreshadow of a believer being clothed with the righteousness of Christ because of His sacrifice.

The sin nature that Adam acquired has been passed on to his descendants so that all are born with that nature––and if they remain in that condition until physical death, when the soul departs from the body, then that person will ultimately experience the "second death" (Rev 20:14) ––and the person will be separated from God for all eternity.

Man comes into this world spiritually dead, lacking the life of God, but isn't spiritually unconscious––not at all. Paul notes in Romans chapter 1:18–20:

> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because **what may be known of God is manifest in them**, for **God has shown it to them**. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, **being understood by the things that are made**, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse…

Therefore, the unregenerate man knows that God exists and is powerful just from observing the Creation––such that he is without excuse. Furthermore, beyond what can be known of God from the Creation, there are aspects of His righteous law and standard that are intuitively understood by every person:

> …for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, …although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who s**how the work of the law written in their hearts**, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) (Rom 2:14–15).

In other words, humans are not spiritually unconscious and simply neutral toward God. Rather, they are intentionally enemies of God by nature, being aware of what they are doing–at least to the degree that they are *without excuse*.

REFORMED THEOLOGY: FAITH AS A GIFT

Reformed soteriology generally holds that saving faith is a gift from God, such that man has no part in his own salvation. This is a logically and theologically necessary conclusion flowing from their definition of Total Depravity. Ephesians 2:8–9 is at the heart of this aspect of their soteriological system: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

The argument is that the antecedent of *gift* is *faith* – and so God gives even the faith necessary to believe the gospel. Of course, we can try to decide this on the grammatical construction of the Greek, but it's not that simple. That approach is not decisive or there wouldn't be a debate. The better way to understand the passage is to consider

the flow of Paul's argument, the concept that he is communicating, and his overall theology.

When looking at it that way, the subject at hand is the entire concept of salvation by grace through faith––as opposed to salvation through works. If salvation were by works, then there could be a reason for boasting, whereas salvation through faith gives no opportunity for it––again Paul's precise point. Therefore, salvation is the gift that is received by the grace of God through *our* faith, and this is consistent with Paul's description of eternal life (not faith) being a gift in Romans 6:23.

The only place in Scripture where faith is referred to as a gift is in Romans 12, and this is in relation to faith given by grace for making use of one's spiritual gifts––not something given prior to salvation for justification.

> For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as **God has dealt to each one a measure of faith**…Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy **in proportion to our faith;** (Rom 12:3–6).

This becomes an important part of the discussion when it comes to the matter of whether faith precedes regeneration or vice versa, as demanded by Reformed/Lordship theology.

REFORMED THEOLOGY: REGENERATION PRECEDES FAITH

To be fair, some Reformed theologians do make a biblical connection between total depravity and spiritual death. After quoting from Ephesians 2, Reformed theologian James White adds:

> Dead in sin. Can dead men do good things? No, they cannot. Dead men are dead.[10]
>
> The Bible says that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. DEAD! Not gravely ill, not tremendously weakened or impaired, but utterly dead. Finished. Stiffs.[11]
>
> We now turn to God's means of bringing sinful, dead men unto Himself. We move back into eternity, to the very counsel of the Trinity, and the decree of election.[12]

Monogerism.com also draws the logical and inescapable conclusion of the Reformed understanding of what it means to be spiritually dead––since man has been elected in eternity past unto regeneration, man does nothing at all in order to be regenerated.

> Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ — i**t takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive** and gives him a new nature. **Faith is not something man contributes to salvation** but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation — it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.[13]

The Westminster Shorter Catechism describes regeneration in this way:

> The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ, **by working faith in us**, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual

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10 White, *The Sovereign Grace of God*, 56–7, loc. 55, Kindle.
11 White, 56–57, loc. 55, Kindle.
12 White, 64, loc. 64, Kindle.
13 Accessed 12/28/20, https://www.monergism.com/topics/doctrines-grace/five-points-calvinism?fbclid=IwAR0aEOPW19BqyeqMiO1uHR_k7dAqPqT3xzw7keeW4qNdRAdx581URslHris.

> calling." This effectual calling is defined to be "the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing…our wills, he does persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel.[14]
>
> …"they who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are farther sanctified." In Westminster Confession 10.2 effectual calling is made to include regeneration, because man is said to be "altogether passive, until he is enabled to answer the call."[15]

Thus, the effectual call produces conviction, and results in the renewing of our wills, enabling us to embrace Jesus (i.e., believe). In other words, Total Depravity holds that man ***is so completely dead*** that he lacks even the capacity to believe the gospel––and therefore must be regenerated (i.e., brought to life) before faith can be exercised. And furthermore, as noted above, the Reformed theologian argues that even the faith exercised by the newly regenerated person is itself a gift and not merely a human response to the gospel's offer of forgiven sin and eternal life in Jesus Christ.

To summarize, all who are effectively called are regenerated and are completely passive throughout the entire process, being unable to respond to the gospel call until regeneration has taken place. So, once again, the Calvinist argues that regeneration must precede faith because man lacks the capacity to believe prior to being brought to life by God.

It must be noted that this is strictly about the logical order of salvation and not about chronological order. Everyone on both sides of the discussion agrees that the exercise of faith and regeneration

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[14] William Greenough Thayer Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology,* ed. Alan W. Gomes, 3rd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2003), 761.
[15] Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*.

happen at precisely the same moment in time chronologically. However, the logical order of salvation has significant implications when it comes to sharing the gospel, especially when combined with the Reformed doctrines of Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, and Limited Atonement. For example, in any given evangelism situation, a Reformed evangelist is constrained by his theology from saying to a lost person, "God loves you and Christ died for you" ––because He only loves the elect and died for them alone.

John Piper argues that the effectual call inevitably results in regeneration––that the drawing itself is the new birth:

> Or, as Jesus says three times in John 6, no one can come to him unless the Father draws him. And when **that drawing brings a person into living connection with Jesus, we call it the new birth.** Verse 37: "All that the Father gives me will come to me." Verse 44: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." Verse 65: "No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." **All of these wonderful works of drawing, granting, and giving are the work of God in regeneration.** Without them we do not come to Christ, because we don't prefer to come. We so strongly prefer self-reliance that we cannot come. That is what has to be changed in the new birth.[16]

Piper leaves out of his argument crucial aspects of Jesus' discourse and unfortunately seems to allow his Reformed theology to influence his handling of the passage. Such is what happens when someone relies on elements of a theological hermeneutic, rather than a strictly biblical one.

First, and most significantly, he fails to note the condition that Jesus gives for receiving eternal life, namely that a person must believe.

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[16] John Piper, *Finally Alive: What Happens When We Are Born Again* (Fearn, Rossshire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2009), 52–3.

"Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent'" (John 6:29).

Piper consistently leaves out any mention of man's responsibility in gaining salvation. The following are several important examples (note: Jesus uses *comes* and *believes* synonymously):

> And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. **He who comes to Me** shall never hunger, and **he who believes in Me** shall never thirst" (John 6:35).
>
> All that the Father gives Me **will come to Me**, and **the one who comes to Me** I will by no means cast out (John 6:37).
>
> And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and **believes in Him** may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:40).
>
> Most assuredly, I say to you, **he who believes in Me** has everlasting life (John 6:47).
>
> "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But t**here are some of you who do not believe**." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were **who did not believe**, and who would betray Him (John 6:63–64).

Over and over, Jesus emphasizes human responsibility in the process of salvation. So, while the *ordo solutis* that Jesus presents is faith then regeneration, Piper consistently turns it around to be regeneration then faith.

Piper further explains the order of salvation and how he believes that regeneration precedes faith:

> So the chain of thought goes like this: **The new birth happens as we are brought into contact with the living and abiding word, the gospel.** The first effect of this new birth is that we see and receive

> God and his Son and his work and his will as supremely beautiful and valuable. **That's faith.** This faith overcomes the world, that is, it overcomes the enslaving power of the world to be our supreme treasure.[17]

One of the passages most commonly used by Calvinists to explain why regeneration must precede faith is the account of Lazarus being raised from the dead in John 11. Piper explains:

> When Jesus stood before the grave of Lazarus who had been dead for four days, **Lazarus had no part in imparting his new life**. He was dead. Jesus, not Lazarus, created the new life.
>
> In John 11:43, Jesus says to the dead Lazarus, "Lazarus, come out." And the next verse says, "The man who had died came out." So Lazarus takes part in this resurrection. He comes out. Christ causes it. Lazarus does it. He is the one who rises from the dead! Christ brings about the resurrection. Lazarus acts out the resurrection. The instant Christ commands Lazarus to rise, Lazarus does the rising. The instant God gives new life, we do the living. **The instant the Spirit produces faith, we do the believing.**[18]

The problem with using this account is that it breaks down in the details because spiritual death is not analogous to physical death in the way it is used here. First, the Calvinist handling of the account focuses only on the physical aspect of Lazarus' death––which is a tactical blunder. While Lazarus' physical body was dead and incapable of responding, Lazarus himself would have been fully alive and conscious in the Bosom of Abraham––Paradise, as evidenced by a different Lazarus, a beggar, who had also died (Luke 16:22). Thus, when Jesus called Lazarus to return from the grave, this was exclusively

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17 Piper, *Finally Alive*, 131.
18 Piper, 79.

about reanimating a dead body (a creation miracle) such that a living spirit could respond to Jesus' call to take up his abode there once again.

Questions abound. Could Lazarus have resisted since he still had a will? Did he obey by faith? Was there anything good in this for Lazarus? For his sisters and friends? Yes. But, for him? No. In fact, in the next chapter the religious leaders put out a death warrant on him precisely because he had been raised from the dead.

This illustration breaks further down for the Calvinist because Lazarus had the capacity to respond to Jesus' call to return to his physical body––a decision that he would have made by obedience and faith when he heard the Lord shout, "Lazarus! Come forth!" While to the unsuspecting this might appear to be a convincing parallel to a sinner being brought to spiritual life; in reality there is no correspondence, and it simply cannot be used to illustrate regeneration preceding faith. This is a logical blunder.

Another common illustration compares spiritual birth to childbirth (generally in connection with Jesus' exchange with Nicodemus about being born again). The argument goes that since we had no say in our birth, this effectively illustrates that we had no say in our spiritual rebirth. In reality, this illustration quickly breaks down as well.

If conception is used to illustrate regeneration, this breaks down because before conception, there was no human being in existence, and there was no person in rebellion against God. The same is true if you equate regeneration with the point of birth because this involves a person who has committed no sins and has not been disobedient to God in any way. This is nothing like someone who is older and accountable to God––and so this illustration also fails to show that regeneration precedes faith.

Those who believe that regeneration follows faith––that regeneration is the result of faith in Christ, fully grasp from Scripture that no one can come to the Father except through Jesus (John 14:6) and that

no one comes to Jesus unless the Father draws him (John 6:44). This is because no one naturally seeks God (Rom 3:11). So, clearly, no one comes to God on his own – someone must be drawn to the Lord in the context of hearing the gospel. God must make the first move. But this falls short of regeneration.

Calvinists consider themselves monergists––with monergism based on the Greek root ἐνέργεια (energeia), from which the term comes into the English as *energy* or *work*. Therefore, the point of *monergism* is that only God does the work in salvation. Conversely, Calvinists charge that those who hold that faith precedes regeneration are guilty of holding to *synergism* (*to work together*). In other words, if faith isn't the gift, but is rather exercised by the unregenerate, then they are working together with God, cooperating with God such that salvation is not really apart from works.

This is a dishonest (although often effective) move on the part of Calvinists, because it requires them to redefine faith as a meritorious work if it's not a gift from God or exercised prior to regeneration. This sleight of hand that changes faith into a work is completely foreign to Scripture––and is, in fact, entirely contrary to Scripture. Paul's entire discussion of Abraham in Romans chapter 4 makes it clear that, by definition, faith is not a work––the two things stand in contrast:

> For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness (Rom 4:2–5).

Therefore, when the unregenerate person exercises his own faith under the convicting and drawing work of the Holy Spirit, that faith

is in no way a meritorious work. Therefore, those who do not believe that regeneration precedes faith should not allow themselves to be tagged with the pejorative label of *synergist*.

LORDSHIP SALVATION DEFINED

As noted earlier, the most basic question regarding Lordship Salvation is, "What constitutes saving faith?" So, what is the gospel message as presented by Lordship Salvation? What kind of response is needed such that an unregenerate person can be regenerated and thus eternally saved? Answers by John MacArthur and Steven Lawson were given above. The following answers by others are instructive.

Kenneth Gentry writes:

> The Lordship view holds to the necessity of acknowledging Christ as the Lord and Master of one's life in the act of truly believing in Him as Savior. **These are not two different, sequential acts (or successive steps), but rather one act of pure, trusting faith**.[19]
>
> To properly understand The Truth about Salvation it is important to have an adequate grasp of what saving faith truly is.[20]
>
> **To trust Jesus Christ, the Lord of the universe, must involve submission to him as personal Lord and Master.** One cannot be relying on Christ if he chooses to chart his own life course in opposition to the Lord from the very outset of his faith relationship.[21]
>
> It correlates the relationship of New Testament faith with that of the Old Testament, showing that **both revolve around obedience**.[22]

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[19] Kenneth L. Gentry Jr, *The Truth about Salvation* (The Truth about Series), 86–7, Kindle.
[20] Gentry, *The Truth about Salvation*, 87, Kindle.
[21] Gentry, 88, Kindle.
[22] Gentry, Kindle.

This last comment is very telling. While the Calvinist will adamantly declare that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, Gentry's admission above shows that he has *front-loaded* the gospel with works in forethought. In other words, faith must include a *promise* of obedience or it is not the kind of faith that results in salvation.

Gil Rugh, in *Lordship Salvation: What Must a True Believer Believe?* affirms as this author has earlier:

> The lordship controversy is primarily a debate about the nature of saving faith.[23]
>
> All those who would be saved must realize this and bow before Him in humble submission. Believing in the sovereign Christ is part of true saving faith. A person cannot be saved and say, "I believe Jesus is God but I will not submit to His authority over my life."[24]
>
> These texts clearly show that it is impossible for a person to be saved who is unwilling to submit himself to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus is Lord. He is God. He is Messiah. No one can deny these essential truths about Jesus and be saved. The idea that "Lord" does not include the idea of "master" would have been totally foreign to the people of New Testament times.[25]

This author would agree that intentional conscious rejection of Christ's Lordship would not be consistent with saving faith. But that is a different matter than the promise of obedience demanded of an unregenerate person as a condition for salvation.

Rugh summarizes his understanding of Lordship Salvation this way:

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[23] Gil Rugh, *Lordship Salvation: What Must a True Believer Believe?* (Lincoln, NE: Sound Words Publishing), loc. 145, Kindle.
[24] Rugh, *Lordship Salvation*, loc. 243, Kindle.
[25] Rugh, loc. 290, Kindle.

> As I examine the biblical issues at hand, I am convinced that the view known as lordship salvation is most in line with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Lordship salvation holds: 1) Salvation is by God's grace alone through faith alone; works do not contribute to salvation in any way. 2) **Saving faith includes a willingness to submit to Jesus as Lord. This means not only believing that Jesus is God but also being willing to submit to Him as the sovereign Master**. 3) Saving faith includes repentance from sin. 4) When a person is truly saved they will evidence it by a transformed life.[26]

Here Rugh either unwittingly commits a logical blunder or is engaging in semantic gymnastics. To deny the place of works in salvation in one breath, while demanding willing submission to Jesus as Lord in the next––which inherently includes works, is clearly problematic. Again, it places a demand upon an unbeliever that cannot be met: "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14).

So once again, this introduces an impasse––one that can only be resolved by the Calvinist placing regeneration prior to faith.

In his book, *Hard to Believe,* MacArthur repeatedly confuses justification and sanctification, salvation and discipleship–– which is at the heart of the Lordship problem:

> The true gospel is a call to self-denial.[27]
>
> That's the true gospel. Jesus said it unmistakably and inescapably, "If anyone desires to come after Me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross,** and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life

[26] Rugh, loc. 569, Kindle.
[27] MacArthur, *Hard to Believe*, 2, loc. 2, Kindle.

> will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matt 16:24–25).[28]
>
> He told the story of a man who found a pearl of great price and sold all he had to buy it. The complete surrender of all possessions is the essence of salvation. It is, "**I give up everything. I deny myself. I offer my life**, both in terms of death, if need be, and in terms of obedience in life."[29]

As has been suggested before, this is nothing less than a barter – it is not the offer of a free gift.

THE LORDSHIP CONUNDRUM

"What constitutes saving faith?" It is this question that presents an insurmountable logical problem for the Calvinist who holds to Lordship Salvation––as most do.

It's really quite simple: If regeneration actually precedes faith, then by definition a regenerate person can *only* exercise saving faith. What other kind of faith could he possibly exercise?

In other words, if God regenerates an elect person ***so that*** the person **can believe the gospel,** then the question, "What constitutes saving faith?" is rendered entirely moot. A regenerate person who has been given the gift of faith can do ***nothing but*** meet the Lordship demands for the kind of faith that accompanies salvation. A saved person can have nothing less than saving faith at the moment of salvation.

Since Calvinist theology rejects the idea that an elect, regenerate person can somehow become unregenerate, then there is obviously

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[28] MacArthur, *Hard to Believe*, 5, loc. 128, Kindle.
[29] MacArthur, 16, loc. 300, Kindle.

no possibility of going back to an unregenerate state. This begs the question as to why emphasis should be placed on the *quality* or *kind* or *nature* of saving faith that must be exercised by the unregenerate person in order to be saved in the first place.

CONCLUSION

Since Lordship Salvation is demonstrably illogical due to the moot point of what constitutes saving faith, then what function can the Lordship approach possibly serve within five-point Calvinism? The only real answer to this question is that its function must somehow be in relation to the "P" in TULIP––the "Perseverance of the Saints." In other words, Lordship Salvation becomes a "test for the elect" ––a way of determining "who is in and who is out?" based on whether they live up to the subjective standards of whoever might be doing the judging. Do they persevere? If they don't, then they demonstrate that their faith had been spurious and failed to be the kind of faith demanded by the Lordship System. In reality, Lordship Salvation becomes nothing less than modern-day Pharisaism.

3

Does John's Gospel Require Continual Belief for Eternal Salvation?

Tom Stegall

Centuries ago, the slave trader turned preacher, John Newton, penned the now famous words to the classic hymn ("Amazing Grace"): "How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed." The hour Newton first believed was a moment that changed his eternal destiny. This is true of all who believe in Jesus Christ and are born again into the family of God forever. While many professing Christians happily sing these lyrics to "Amazing Grace," few stop to consider their theological implications and even whether they agree with Scripture.

Does the Bible teach that eternal salvation is conditioned on the moment of initial faith in Christ or on continual belief throughout one's lifetime? In Acts 16:30, an unsaved Gentile poses the ultimate question to Paul and Silas, saying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Their authoritative reply was simple: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (v. 31). Paul and Silas did not answer by commanding him to "Believe, and continue to believe" or "believe and persevere in your faith to the end, and you shall be saved." But this is exactly what we would expect Paul and Silas to say if they held to the teaching of the perseverance of the saints. In contrast, the Bible repeatedly teaches that belief in Christ for everlasting life occurs at a moment in time; it is not an ongoing

condition that must be fulfilled, such as perseverance in faith and good works to the end of one's life.

THE SINGLE MOMENT OF BELIEF ILLUSTRATED IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

There is perhaps no better book in the entire Bible for illustrating the meaning of the word "believe" than the Gospel of John. Believing in Christ for eternal life was in fact the very reason this Gospel was written according to its purpose statement in John 20:30–31. The various forms of the Greek verb and participle for "believe" (πιστεύω) occur 241 times in the New Testament with 98 of these occurring in the Gospel of John. This means that over forty percent of all New Testament occurrences of πιστεύω as a verb or verbal part of speech are found in John's Gospel alone. No wonder John is often referred to as the "Gospel of Belief."[1] John's Gospel uses three metaphors for believing that demonstrate the momentary nature of belief in Christ for eternal life––the single acts of a look, a drink, and eating bread.

Belief Illustrated by Looking

In John 3, Christ uses a basic Old Testament object lesson from Numbers 21:5–9 to explain to the religious Pharisee Nicodemus how to be born again. In John 3:14, Christ refers to Numbers 21, where many Israelites complained about Moses's leadership and God's

[1] Figures based on Nestle-Aland 27th edition Critical Text; those of the Robinson-Pierpont Majority Text and Scrivener Textus Receptus vary slightly. Not surprisingly, some scholars see the theme of belief versus unbelief as the central motif of John's Gospel; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 97; W. H. Griffith Thomas, "The Plan of the Fourth Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125, no. 500 (October 1968): 314.

provision for them as they wandered in the desert. Consequently, the Lord judged the Israelites with serpents so that many died. In Numbers 21, the Lord gives to Moses the remedy for this snake problem. "And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." So, Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live" (Num 21:8–9).

From this episode in Israel's history, the Lord Jesus illustrates for Nicodemus what it means to believe in Him for everlasting life. He says to Nicodemus, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes [ὁ πιστεύων] in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14–15).

Just as the Israelites had to acknowledge their sinful, snake-bitten condition and look in faith to the bronze serpent, which was God's symbol of judgment upon their sin,[2] even so lost people today must look in faith to Christ crucified as God's provision for their own snake-bitten, sinful condition.[3] All that was required of the Israelites was a look of faith, and they were instantaneously and permanently healed. They were not required to keep on looking at the brass serpent for the rest of their lives in order to stay healed (Arminianism) or to prove that they were truly healed initially (Calvinism).[4] When a lost sinner places his faith in Christ for salvation, at that instant, he receives God's gift of eternal life by grace and is instantaneously born again (John 5:24). Robert Gromacki explains well that ongoing faith is *not* required to complete the heavenly transaction: "How many times did the people have to look at the serpent to

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[2] Warren W. Wiersbe, "John," in *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1989), 1:296.

[3] Michael D. Stallard, "Sin and Classical Free Grace Theology," in *Freely by His Grace: Classical Grace Theology,* ed. J. B. Hixson, Rick Whitmire, and Roy B. Zuck (Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2012), 350.

[4] Lloyd A. Olson, *Eternal Security: Once Saved; Always Saved* (Mustand, OK: Tate, 2007), 40-42; Earl D. Radmacher, *Salvation* (Nashville: Word, 2000), 121–2.

be healed? Just once. One look prompted by faith was enough. So, it is with Calvary. How many times must one look at Christ in faith to be saved? Just once. The faith that heals or saves is an act, a completed event, not an attitude."[5]

However, some perseverance advocates cannot let the simplicity of Christ's statement in John 3:14–15 stand as it is written. Amazingly, one famous Calvinist author and Bible teacher morphs the simple look of faith described by Christ into a meritorious human work: "A more careful study of Numbers 21 reveals that Jesus was not painting a picture of easy faith... In order to look at the bronze snake on the pole, they had to drag themselves to where they could see it. They were in no position to glance flippantly at the pole and then proceed with lives of rebellion."[6]

This caricature completely distorts the biblical account of Numbers 21 and Jesus' use of it in John 3 as an illustration of faith in Him for eternal life. Nowhere does Numbers 21 say that the Israelites "had to drag themselves" to where they could see the bronze serpent. In fact, the reason for setting the serpent on a pole (vv. 8–9) was to elevate it so that all could see it, thereby picturing Christ's own lifting up on the cross to make salvation available to all, just as it says in John 12:32–33: " 'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. 'He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die."[7]

Second, the Israelites' look at the raised bronze serpent in Numbers 21 was deliberate in response to God's prescription spoken through Moses. There was nothing "flippant" or superficial about it. Facing one's sin and its judgment in the symbol of the serpent and

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[5] Robert Gromacki, *Salvation Is Forever* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1989), 88.
[6] John F. MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 46.
[7] John F. Hart, "John," in *The Moody Bible Commentary,* ed. Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 1615.

then accepting God's prescribed remedy and substitute required at that moment personal accountability, humility, and trust––not strenuous activity.

Third, the Israelites actually did "proceed with lives of rebellion" against the Lord after their look of faith at the bronze serpent in Numbers 21. In fact, the wilderness generation of Israelites was notorious for its ongoing unbelief, idolatry, and rebellion against the Lord, despite having initially believed in Him and His word. Read the Bible's own description of that generation in Exodus 14:31: "Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses." (Ex 14:31). This is consistent with the testimony of Psalm 106, which says that the wilderness generation initially believed God's word but afterward departed from Him: "Then they believed his words; they sang his praise. But they soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel. But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert" (Ps 106:12–14). Consequently, a few chapters after the incident of the brass serpent in Numbers 21, the book of Numbers goes on to say that the Israelites "began to whore with the daughters of Moab... and bowed down to their gods," so that "Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel" (Num. 25:1–3). Those who died in that plague were 24,000 Israelites (v. 9). This sad account demonstrates that genuine believers do not necessarily persevere to the end of their lives in faith and holiness (1 Cor 11:28–32). However, this account also illustrates that God in His sovereignty and grace is still willing to save (Ex 4:31; 14:31) and heal (Num 21:5–9), simply on the basis of a one-time look of faith, knowing full well in His omniscience that rebellion and sin leading to death may transpire afterward.[8]

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[8] Michael D. Halsey, *The Gospel of Grace and Truth: A Theology of Grace from the Gospel of John* (Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2015), 208.

The incident in Numbers 21 is used by the Lord in John 3 to illustrate the true requirement for eternal life––a simple look of faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross in dying a substitutionary death for one's sins, rather than relying upon one's own human goodness or works. This solitary act of trust in Christ and His finished work would have been humbling for a moral and religious man such as Nicodemus, but it was necessary. Whether a person is moral (like Nicodemus in John 3) or immoral (like the Israelites in Numbers 25 and the Samaritan woman in John 4), the sole condition for eternal life today is the same––a single act of belief in Jesus Christ.[9]

Belief Illustrated by Drinking

When the Lord Jesus encountered the sinful Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar, He used the analogy of drinking physical water to picture believing in Him for eternal life.

> Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks [ὁ πίνων] of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks [ὃς πίῃ] of the water that I will give him will never [οὐ μὴ] be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water" (John 4:13–15).

In this passage Christ equates believing in Him with drinking from the well. Drinking in John's Gospel is a metaphor for appropriating eternal life by faith (6:35). Older commentators and grammarians sometimes note the contrast in tenses between the present in verse 12 (ὁ πίνων) and the aorist in verse 13 (ὃς πίῃ) as evidence of

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[9] Thomas L. Constable, *Expository Notes on John* (Garland, TX: Sonic Light, 2016), 73; Hart, "John," 1615.

a distinction between continuous drinking and a onetime act.[10] But the distinction in grammatical form is unnecessary to make the point about different kinds of action since the context itself makes this clear. People had to *keep drinking* from the well of Sychar to satisfy their physical thirst, and thus they would "thirst again" (4:13). In contrast, Jesus offered the woman *a drink* that would leave her spiritual thirst quenched for eternity,[11] so that she would "never [οὐ μὴ] be thirsty again."[12] This was not one lifelong, continuous drink that perseveres to the end. Gromacki captures again the essence of Christ's teaching in John 4, stating that a person "just has to have one spiritual drink of Christ and he will have spiritual life. There is a contrast in thirsts. Men are always thirsty for natural water, but Jesus said that *one* spiritual drink will forever quench man's spiritual thirst."[13] Jesus Christ is not teaching in John 4 that we must keep on drinking, and drinking, and drinking in order to either maintain the gift of eternal life (Arminianism) or prove that we possess it (Calvinism).

In John 4, Jesus is also not requiring the woman at the well to make some sort of costly commitment to serve Christ before He would grant her eternal life, as some Lordship Salvation teachers suppose.

> Some people hold the view that saving faith involves no idea of obedience or commitment... Can we concede that the verb "drink" conveys the idea of appropriation apart from commitment? Certainly not. Matthew 20:22 ("Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?") and John 18:11 ("the cup which the Father has given Me, shall

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[10] Robertson says, "With this difference in the tenses used (πίνων, keep on drinking, πίῃ, once for all)." A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament,* 6 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, n.d.), 5:63.
[11] Halsey, *Gospel of Grace and Truth*, 211; Wiersbe, "John," 300.
[12] Olson, *Eternal Security,* 50.
[13] Gromacki, *Salvation Is Forever*, 89.

> I not drink it?") both use *drink* in a way that clearly implies full compliance and surrender. Furthermore, to attempt to define faith with a metaphor is unwarranted selectivity.[14]

There is nothing unwarranted about using the very metaphors of looking, drinking, and eating that the Lord Jesus Himself instituted to picture the act of believing in Him for eternal life. However, it is completely unwarranted to use Christ's own drink from the cup of God's wrath as a comparison with freely drinking the water of eternal life. In Christ's case, the cup He drank amounted to His sacrificial, substitutionary death in the place of sinners. In the case of the woman at the well of Sychar, the cup Jesus was offering her to drink was not the cup of God's wrath that required her own work of dying to pay for sin but was in fact the water of life that was without cost to her because it would be purchased in full by the Offeror Himself (John 19:30). To equate drinking the water of life that Jesus offers sinners to Christ's drinking the cup of wrath merely proves that perseverance advocates are adding the believer's works to Christ's work as a condition for salvation. In contrast, the Lord Jesus' offer of eternal life in John 4:10 is described as the "gift of God", and it was conditioned only upon a single drink––a single act of belief in Him. This is perfectly consistent with the gracious invitation to salvation found at the end of Revelation (which John also wrote): "And whosoever will, let him *take* of the water of life *freely"* (Rev 22:17, KJV, italics added).

Belief Illustrated by Eating

In John 6, the Lord Jesus contrasted the Israelites' continual eating of manna in the desert to receiving Him by faith as the Bread of eternal life.

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[14] MacArthur, *Gospel According to Jesus,* 52–3.

> Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat." Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always [πάντοτε]." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes [ὁ πιστεύων] in me shall never thirst" (John 6:31–35).

The contrast could not be more evident. First, the Jews failed to realize that Christ was the Bread from heaven. Then they mistakenly thought that repeated consumption of this Bread was necessary to sustain life as with the Israelites' collection of manna in the desert for forty years (Ex 16; Josh 5:12). Their confusion is seen in verse 34 where they ask Christ to "always" (πάντοτε) give them this Bread. The Greek adverb πάντοτε means "always," "evermore" (KJV), or "at all times."[15] In verse 34, it modifies the verb "give," showing that the Jews who followed Jesus assumed this Bread must be constantly, repetitiously given and constantly, repetitiously received in order to meet their need. They were still thinking of their ancestors who had to consume manna daily because of their unsatisfied physical hunger. Yet, in verse 35, Christ promises that if they would believe in Him, they would "never hunger." The Jews missed Jesus' point that the receiving of eternal life and satisfaction of spiritual hunger were not received by repeated consumption of spectacular "Wonder Bread" but instead by a solitary act of eating,

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[15] One lexicon defines πάντοτε as "duration of time, with reference to a series of occasions—'always, at all times, on every occasion.'" Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 1:641, §67.88.

or believing in the right object, the Lord Jesus Christ––the Bread of eternal life.[16]

Regarding the metaphor of eating as a picture of believing in Christ for eternal life, there is an ironic contrast between the first Adam and "the last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45), Jesus Christ. Once again, Gromacki insightfully states, "How many times did Adam have to eat to bring condemnation upon himself and the human race? Only once! One eating brought death. So it is with salvation; one eating brings eternal life."[17] But many perseverance advocates reject this conclusion and claim that Jesus teaches in the Bread of Life Discourse that eternal life is guaranteed only through perpetual eating (i.e., believing). Calvinist James White claims:

> Throughout this passage [John 6:35–45] an important truth is presented that again might be missed in many English translations. When Jesus describes the one who comes to Him and who believes in Him, He uses the present tense to describe this coming, believing, or, in other passages, hearing or seeing. The present tense refers to a continuous, ongoing action... The wonderful promises that are provided by Christ are not for those who do not truly and continually believe. The faith that saves is a living faith, a faith that always looks to Christ as Lord and Savior... The true Christian is the one continually coming, always believing in Christ. Real Christian faith is an ongoing faith, not a one-time act. If one wishes to be eternally satiated, one meal is not enough. If we wish to feast on the bread of heaven, we must do so all our lives. We will never hunger or thirst if we are always coming and always believing in Christ.[18]

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[16] Halsey, 211; Robert P. Lightner, *Portraits of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 54; Wiersbe, "John," 312.
[17] Gromacki, 90.
[18] James White, *Drawn by the Father* (Lindenhurst, NY: Great Christian Books, 2000), 19–20.

Do the biblical metaphors in John's Gospel for believing in Christ really require ongoing belief? The present tense certainly does not indicate this, as explained later in this paper; nor do the contexts of the metaphors themselves. According to the original context of Numbers 21 referred to in John 3:14, continual looking at the brass serpent was not required either to get healed or stay healed. In John 4, Jesus promised the woman at the well that she would "never thirst" (4:14a) again if she believed in Him. This quenching of her thirst was not because of the continuance of the act of drinking but because of the permanence of the water within the one who believes: "The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (v. 14b). The perpetual wellspring of eternal life does not continue to flow within a person because it is continually being fed from outside by the believer's perpetual acts of drinking or ingestion. According to Jesus Christ Himself, one drink initiates eternal hydration and satiation from within.

Likewise in John 6:35, when Jesus promises that "whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst," the satisfaction of hunger and thirst is because of the perpetual nature of what is consumed (the eternal food and drink––Jesus Christ), not because of the perpetual faithfulness of the believer in eating and drinking. To conclude otherwise is to destroy the intended contrast in each passage between the insufficient physical-temporal metaphor and the spiritual-eternal meaning of the metaphor. In other words, the Lord Jesus uses an intentional contrast between the repeated consumption of bread and water to keep satisfying one's physical hunger and thirst versus the one act of appropriating Him by faith to eternally and permanently satisfy one's spiritual need. In the physical realm, a person must eat and drink continually because physical food and water is only temporal in duration and satisfaction. By contrast, the Bread of Life and the Living Water that

Christ gives never ceases, and therefore it needs to be received only once. But to say that this Bread and Water must be continually and repeatedly consumed by the believer in order to either maintain or guarantee salvation ends up contradicting Christ's statements about "never" hungering or thirsting again. After all, why would a person need to eat and drink again if that person was "never" hungry and thirsty anymore?

Moreover, to interpret John's metaphors of believing in Christ for eternal life as requiring ongoing appropriation of Christ actually reflects the very same works-oriented thinking as the unregenerate Jews whom Jesus is correcting in John 6. This reveals what is ultimately behind the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints––a doctrine of salvation that is not solely by God's grace but leaves room for human merit. Notice how A. W. Pink uses John 6 to teach the necessity of laboring in one's continual appropriation of Christ for final salvation.

> God has purposed the eternal felicity of His people and that purpose is certain of full fruition, nevertheless it is not effected without the use of means on their part, any more than a harvest is obtained and secured apart from human industry and persevering diligence. God has made promise to His saints that "bread shall be given" them and their "water shall be sure" (Isa 33:16), but that does not exempt them from the discharge of their duty or provide them with an indulgence to take their ease. The Lord gave a plentiful supply of manna from heaven, but the Israelites had to get up early and gather it each morning, for it melted when the sun shone on it. So His people are now required to "labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (John 6:27).[19]

[19] A. W. Pink, *The Saint's Perseverance* (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace, 2001), 65–6.

This interpretation misses the whole point of Christ's metaphor of eating the Bread of Life by simply believing in Him rather than working for it. Jesus is not teaching in John 6:27 that the Jews should work for eternal life or that faith in Him inherently includes good works or "the use of means on their part." Jesus uses the term "labor" (v. 27) because the Jewish crowd had been traveling around the Sea of Galilee to diligently "seek" Him out (v. 26) because of the sign-miracle He performed of multiplying the loaves and fishes (vv. 1–15). Yet, in their pursuit of a miracle worker, they seek or labor for the wrong thing. They misunderstand Christ's reference to "labor" (v. 27) and think in terms of works, saying, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" (v. 28). Mankind naturally thinks in terms of meriting the favour and salvation of God. Consequently, Christ corrects them in verse 29, replying, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."[20] Morris offers a helpful clarification of this passage, stating:

> Some people once asked Jesus what they must do "to work the works of God" (6:28), a question that clearly showed that they thought that their salvation depended on their working works that would be acceptable to God. But Jesus told them that "the work of God" (the singular is important) is that they "believe in him whom he has sent" (6:29). The way into God's salvation is not the way of human merit or human achievement of any sort, but rather of trust in the one whom God sent.[21]

Christ clarifies that God is not requiring them to "work" but to "believe" in Him. We do not "labor" or "work" to receive the "gift of

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[20] Lightner, *Portraits of Jesus in the Gospel of John,* 52; J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 237.
[21] Leon Morris, *Jesus Is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 129.

God" (John 4:10), otherwise we turn His gift into an earned reward, thereby nullifying grace (Rom 11:6).[22]

According to the Gospel of John––the Gospel of Belief––believing in Christ is described as a non-meritorious look, drink, or act of eating.[23] In these three metaphorical illustrations of belief, the Lord Jesus Christ consistently portrays belief in Him for eternal salvation as a simple, momentary act rather than an ongoing activity. Only this conclusion allows the Christian to joyfully sing with assurance:

> Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
> That saved a wretch like me!
> I once was lost, but now am found;
> Was blind, but now I see.
> 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
> And grace my fears relieved;
> How precious did that grace appear
> The hour I first believed.

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[22] Regarding those who use verses 28–29 to teach that works are necessary for eternal life, John Calvin says: "It is idle sophistry, under the pretext of this passage, to maintain that we are justified by works, if faith justifies, because it is likewise called *a work*. First, it is plain enough that Christ does not speak with strict accuracy when he calls faith *a work,* just as Paul makes a comparison between *the law of faith* and *the law of works* (Rom. 3:27). Secondly, when we affirm that men are not justified by *works*, we mean *works* by the merit of which men may obtain favour with God. Now *faith* brings nothing to God, but, on the contrary, places man before God as empty and poor, that he may be filled with Christ and with his grace. It is, therefore, if we may be allowed the expression, a passive work, to which no reward can be paid, and it bestows on man no other righteousness than that which he receives from Christ." And regarding faith itself being God's gift, Calvin continues to comment about John 6:29: "Those who infer from this passage that *faith* is the gift of God are mistaken; for Christ does not now show what God produces in us, but what he wishes and requires from us." John Calvin and W. Pringle, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010).

[23] John also uses the metaphors of *coming* to Christ (5:40; 6:35, 37, 44, 65; 7:37), *entering* through a door (10:9), and the act of *accepting* or *receiving* (1:12; 5:43) to depict the nature of belief in Christ for eternal life as a momentary event rather than a continual process. Charles C. Bing, *Lordship Salvation: A Biblical Evaluation and Response,* GraceLife Edition (Burleson, TX: GraceLife Ministries, 1992), 130 n. 45, 134 n. 61, 143 n. 108.

THE GREEK PRESENT TENSE OF "BELIEVE" IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

John's illustrations of biblical belief in Christ for eternal life by looking (John 3:14–15), drinking (4:13–15), and eating (6:31–35) require little to no technical explanation. They are rather straightforward in teaching that such belief does not require a lifelong commitment or habitual action. While such passages should be sufficient in themselves to establish the premise that "saving" faith is momentary or instantaneous, this conclusion is further clarified and confirmed by an accurate understanding of verbs and participles in the Greek New Testament.

Present Tense Verb Form

Misconceptions abound concerning the distinction between the present and aorist tense forms of πιστεύω in the fourth Gospel. This tense distinction is often used as justification for the view that perseverance in faith is a requirement for final salvation and proof of genuine, initial saving belief. However, the mere fact that πιστεύω occurs in the present tense does not by itself indicate a continual act or state of believing. The following quotes reveal that whether a person holds to Calvinism, Arminianism, or neither, the misconception is prevalent that the present tense form of πιστεύω necessarily makes continual belief a requirement for eternal life.

> But it is not a biblical view of faith to say that one may have it at the moment of salvation and never need to have it again. The continuing nature of saving faith is underscored by the use of the present tense of the Greek verb *pisteuō* ("believe") throughout the gospel of John (cf. 3:15–18, 36; 5:24; 6:35, 40; 7:38; 11:25–26; 12:44, 46; 20:31; also Acts 10:43; 13:39; Rom 1:16; 3:22; 4:5; 9:33; 10:4, 10–11). If

believing were a one-time act, the Greek tense in those verses would be aorist.[24]

Do I Have a Present Trust in Christ for Salvation? Paul tells the Colossians that they will be saved on the last day, "provided that you *continue in the faith,* stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard" (Col. 1:23)... In fact, the most famous verse in the entire Bible uses a present tense verb that may be translated, "whoever continues believing in him" may have eternal life (see John 3:16).[25]

In the New Testament, when belief is said to lead to eternal life, as is the case here, the tense expressing continuous action is always used while the tense expressing a single action is never used. The stress is thus placed on continuous faith rather than on an isolated moment of faith.[26]

It misses the mark to say that one only needs faith for salvation and then never needs it again. The very word "faith" in the Greek New Testament indicates ongoing belief in Christ. The Greek verb for faith, *pisteuo*, is usually found in the continuous present tense in the New Testament. *Pisteuo* is in only a very few cases found in the aorist, indicating one-time action. Therefore, the overall pattern of the use of *pisteuo* in the New Testament indicates that faith in a believer's life will be continuous and vital.[27]

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[24] MacArthur (Calvinist), *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 172.

[25] Wayne Grudem (Calvinist), *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 803. Besides John 3:16, Grudem is also mistaken in his interpretation of Colossians 1:23 as requiring ongoing belief in order to prove the genuineness of one's initial faith in Christ and obtain final salvation. See Thomas L. Stegall, *Must Faith Endure for Salvation to Be Sure? A Biblical Study of the Perseverance Versus Preservation of the Saints* (Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2016), 282–8.

[26] George Allen Turner (Arminian) and Julius R. Mantey, *The Gospel According to John*, Evangelical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 99. (Though coauthored with Mantey, Turner wrote the portion of the commentary quoted above.)

[27] David Dunlap (neither Calvinist nor Arminian), *Written Aforetime: Selected Articles from Bible & Life Newsletter from 1993–2009* (Land O' Lakes, FL: Bible & Life Ministries, 2009), 171. Dunlap is a Plymouth Brethren writer who strongly advocates the necessity of the perseverance of the saints for final salvation while also rejecting

> John is not concerned so much with the momentary, individual acts of sin as with the overall characteristic tendencies and inclinations of someone's life. John is not taking a snapshot, but a moving picture. His repeated use of the Greek present tense appears to bear this out. He focuses on the habitual character of the activity in view.[28]
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> The result, to be sure, is security ("never die") but in this passage [John 11:26] "living" and "believing" (progressive presents denoting a continuous state) are necessary prerogatives. In other words, perseverance in the present life from God is necessary to maintain the future certainty of life in the next age.[29]
>
> John, as is his custom, refers [in 1:12] to Christians as "the believing ones" (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν). English translations normally miss this important element of John's Gospel (the contrast between true, saving faith, which is almost always expressed through the use of the present tense indicating an on-going, living faith, versus false faith which is almost always placed in the aorist tense, making no statement about its consistency or vitality). It is literally, "even to those who are believing in His name" or "the believing ones [who believe] in His name." The term "believing" is a present participle.[30]

Similar statements and claims could be multiplied ad infinitum. The view that the present tense in New Testament Greek inherently indicates a continuous, habitual, linear action or state is a deeply ingrained misconception. Despite the popularity of this view, it is

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other major tenets of Calvinism. See David Dunlap, *Limiting Omnipotence: The Consequences of Calvinism—A Study of Critical Issues in Reformed and Dispensational Theology* (Port Colborne, Ontario: Gospel Folio, 2004).

[28] Sam Storms (Calvinist), *Kept for Jesus: What the New Testament Really Teaches about Assurance of Salvation and Eternal Security* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 167.

[29] Grant R. Osborne (Arminian), "Soteriology in the Gospel of John," in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man,* ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1989), 251.

[30] James R. White (Calvinist), *The Potter's Freedom: A Defense of the Reformation and a Rebuttal to Norman Geisler's Chosen But Free* (Amittyville, NY: Calvary, 2000), 185.

a well-known fallacy to Greek language scholars who correctly conclude that the use of the present tense does not automatically indicate an ongoing action or state;[31] and similarly the use of the aorist tense form does not automatically denote a once and for all action or state.[32] Greek verb tense forms do not inherently possess actual, objective kind of action (*Aktionsart*), whether linear or punctiliar. Instead, tense forms indicate the subjective portrayal of that action or state by the writer (aspect).[33] A biblical writer may choose to portray a momentary, instantaneous action using the present tense form to bring the reader more vividly into a scene, or he may choose to zoom out and use the aorist tense form to more broadly and remotely portray an action that is continuous and repeated but presented as a summary statement. This difference in subjective portrayal between the present and aorist tenses is often illustrated by two different vantage points for viewing a parade. The present tense form effectively places the reader on the street curb to see the parade passing right in front of him, while the aorist tense form would be used for a helicopter or bird's-eye view of the parade.

This explains why Gospel writers oftentimes portray the same objective action in Christ's earthly ministry using two different verb tenses. For example, Matthew 4:1 says, "Then Jesus was led up by the

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[31] David L. Mathewson, "The Abused Present," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 23.3 (2013): 343–63.

[32] Frank Stagg, "The Abused Aorist," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972): 222–31.

[33] Constantine R. Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 105–33; Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 19–25; Rodney J. Decker, *Temporal Deixis of the Greek Verb in the Gospel of Mark with Reference to Verbal Aspect* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 26–7; Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 84–5; Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek New Testament with Reference to Tense and Mood* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 75–109; Richard A. Young, *Intermediate Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 105–7. For the current state of Greek verbal aspect studies, see *The Greek Verb Revisited: A Fresh Approach for Biblical Exegesis,* ed. Steven E. Runge and Christopher J. Fresch (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), esp. 1–160.

Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted [πειρασθῆναι] by the devil." Here the infinitive form of "to be tempted/tested" (πειράζω) is in the aorist tense. But in Luke's parallel account, the participle form of πειράζω is present tense: "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted [πειραζόμενος] by the devil" (Luke 4:1–2). In cases where one passage has one tense form and a parallel Gospel passage uses another tense form, the Gospel writers are not making different, conflicting claims about the nature of the Lord's actions or speech; rather they are simply choosing to portray His actions or speech from a vantage point that is either more proximate or remote.

Recognizing this difference between verbal *aspect* (subjective portrayal of an action or state) and *Aktionsart* (the objective nature or kind of action) helps to understand how Greek present and aorist tenses function. Contrary to popular opinion among many Bible teachers, the present tense can be used for momentary, instantaneous, punctiliar action; but when it does so, it is portraying an action or state with greater proximity. Conversely, the aorist tense can be used for continuous action that is perceived and portrayed remotely. An example of the latter occurs in Revelation 20:4. There, the aorist tense is used to summarize an action that will occur continually and repeatedly for a thousand years after Christ's Second Coming:

> Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

The Greek verbs for "came to life" and "reigned" are both in the aorist tense, but the context is explicit that the living and reigning

transpire over a period of one thousand years. Here, the aorist tense is used to remotely summarize the living and reigning that will occur during the millennial kingdom. This use of the aorist tense is not uncommon in the New Testament, nor is the use of the present tense for punctiliar action. An example of the latter occurs in Matthew 3:13: "Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him." The word "came" (παραγίνεται) is in the present tense, which certainly does not mean that Jesus "was continually or habitually arriving"[34] at the Jordan River to meet John the Baptist.

The examples of Matthew 3:13 and Revelation 20:4 demonstrate a very important point with respect to verbs in the Greek New Testament—the verb's *Aktionsart* or kind of action (whether habitual or momentary) is not determined by the verb's tense but by the context in which it occurs and by the lexical meaning or nature of the verb itself. In the context, there may be adverbs or prepositional phrases that modify the verb and provide clues to its duration or kind of action (e.g., "immediately," "at once," "in that hour," "continually").[35] Some verbs by their very nature tend to express either more momentary or continual action. For example, the verb for "crucify" (σταυρόω) inherently means a onetime act based on the nature of crucifixion leading to imminent death. The same is often true with verbs such as "born" (Matt 2:4) or "die" (John 11:51), unless an unusual meaning is indicated by other modifying words in the context, such as Paul exclaiming, "I die *daily*" (1 Cor 15:31). Though the verb for "crucify" (σταυρόω) normally occurs in the aorist tense form, it occasionally occurs in the present tense form (Matt 27:38; Mark 15:27; Luke 23:21), showing that the present tense can certainly be used to portray a onetime event.

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[34] Mathewson, "The Abused Present," 346.
[35] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 499–504.

In the Gospel of John––the "Gospel of Belief" ––the present tense is used to portray several events that are onetime occurrences by their very nature. The Second Coming of Christ is spoken of using the present tense form (14:2–3, 18, 28), along with His ascension (20:17), as are the disciples going fishing one night (21:3). Not only can the present tense form be used to describe onetime, nonrepeatable events occurring in the *present*, such as the Crucifixion, or *future* events from the disciples' standpoint, such as the Ascension and Second Coming, but the present tense even portrays *past*, completed, instantaneous events, such as Christ's coming to earth at the Incarnation (John 6:33, 50). In each of these examples, the inherent meaning of the verb's action and other contextual factors, not the verb's tense form, determine whether the action of the verb is momentary or continual.

Present, Substantival Participle of Πιστεύω

The present tense, articular participle construction for "believe" occurs frequently in the fourth Gospel.[36] This is the construction that occurs in the most popular evangelistic verse in the Bible, John 3:16: "whoever believes [ὁ πιστεύων] in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." When the definite article (ὁ) is used with the present tense participle form of "believe" (πιστεύων), the combination is known as a present, articular, substantival participle construction. In Greek, the present tense, articular participle commonly functions as a substantival noun or descriptive title, so that a phrase like "he who believes" (ὁ πιστεύων) simply means "the believer," without denoting anything specific about the nature of believing, its duration, or even the time when it occurred. The belief may occur at a point

[36] John 3:15, 16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:35, 40, 47; 7:38; 11:25, 26; 12:44, 46; 14:12. See also 1 John 5:1, 5, 10.

in time or repeatedly over a period of time, but the Greek tense does not inherently indicate this information. Though substantival participles in Greek are normally articular, they do not need to be articular in order to function substantivally as nouns. But the addition of the article definitely nominalizes the participle, turning it into a noun in function. Since tense is a function of verbs and the articular participle construction is substantival as a virtual noun phrase, it practically and functionally has a zero tense value, just like nouns or articles themselves. For this reason, a substantival participle construction such as ὁ πιστεύων is best understood as simply a generic title or description, meaning "he who believes," "the believing one," "whoever believes," or even just "the believer."

Even if an action occurs once, that solitary act can identify the entire person and serve as a descriptive title for that person. For example, Adam's one act of sin was enough to identify him thereafter as "a sinner" and all his descendants as "sinners," just as Romans 5:17–19 declares:

> For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

A similar point is made in James 2:10–11, which states that a person who breaks God's law only once is "guilty of all." The person who violates God's law is known as a "transgressor," regardless of whether he broke God's law once or a thousand times. "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not

murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law."

According to these passages, all it takes is one sin for a person to be justly counted as a "sinner" or "transgressor" in God's sight. Virtually all perseverance advocates agree with this point about what constitutes a sinner. Most will also agree that, positively speaking, in our society a man's onetime donation is enough to identify him thereafter as a "benefactor." But if perseverance advocates acknowledge these examples to be true, why do they deny that one act of belief is enough to constitute a person a "believer" in God's sight? If all it takes is one act of sin to become a "sinner" or one donation to become a "benefactor," then all it takes is one act of belief to become a "believer" (ὁ πιστεύων).

The conclusions of Greek grammarians are consistent with this view of ὁ πιστεύων. Nigel Turner explains this use of the present tense, articular participle, saying that in these grammatical constructions the "action (time or variety) is irrelevant and the participle has become a proper name; it may be under Hebraic influence, insofar as the Hebrew participle is also timeless and is equally applicable to past, present and future."[37] The present tense, articular participle ὁ πιστεύων found throughout John's Gospel is best understood, therefore, as fitting the gnomic use of the present tense. According to Wallace, this use of the present tense involves generic subjects and most often occurs with "*generic* statements to describe something that is true *any* time."[38] Other generic, gnomic-type statements using the same grammatical construction that are commonly used by John include "he who hears" (ὁ ἀκούων), "he who loves" (ὁ φιλῶν or ὁ ἀγαπῶν), and "he who does" (ὁ ποιῶν). The Johannine expression

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[37] Nigel Turner, "Syntax," vol. 3, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, ed. James Hope Moulton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), 150–1.
[38] Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics,* 523.

"he who believes" (ὁ πιστεύων) definitely qualifies as a generic subject or statement.[39] Regarding the generic nature of the gnomic present, Fanning says the "sense of a generic statement is usually an *absolute* statement of what each one does once, and not a statement of the individual's customary or habitual activity."[40] Thus, for a group of people who fit the description of ὁ πιστεύων, such as in John 3:36, Fanning says this describes "a group doing an act a single time, rather than repeatedly."[41]

This usage of the present tense, articular participle is quite common in the New Testament. The following eight examples are grammatically identical to ὁ πιστεύων ("he who believes") and demonstrate that this construction does not inherently refer to continual, habitual, persevering belief.

> When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor. Then

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[39] In his popular Greek grammar, Wallace considers the use of *ὁ πιστεύων* in passages like John 3:16 to be a customary or habitual present tense usage based on his *theological* conclusion that John's Gospel stresses continual belief, while admitting that *grammatically* "this could also be taken as a gnomic present" (Wallace, 522). Wallace states that "when a participle is *substantival,* its aspectual force is more susceptible to reduction in force" and that "many substantival participles in the NT are used in generic utterances. The πᾶς ὁ ἀκούων (or ἀγαπῶν, ποιῶν, etc.) formula is always or almost always generic. As such it is expected to involve a *gnomic* idea. Most of these instances involve the present participle" (Wallace, 615). Yet Wallace, who holds to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, interprets the same present, articular participle construction of *ὁ πιστεύων* exceptionally, as meaning "he who [continually] believes." His reason for treating *ὁ πιστεύων* differently is that allegedly in John's Gospel "there seems to be a qualitative distinction between the ongoing act of believing and the simple fact of believing" (Wallace, 522. See also, 523 n. 26; 616 n. 9; 621 n. 22). By claiming this, Wallace is essentially admitting that his interpretation of *ὁ πιστεύων* is theologically driven rather than a purely grammatical conclusion. See Fred Chay and John P. Correia, *The Faith that Saves: The Nature of Faith in the New Testament* (n.p.: Grace Line, 2008), 47–53.

[40] Fanning, *Verbal Aspect,* 217.

[41] Fanning, 216–7.

> when Judas, his betrayer [ὁ παραδιδοὺς], saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders (Matt 27:1–3).

Here in Matthew 27:3, the present tense, articular participle ὁ παραδιδοὺς functionally becomes a noun or title for Judas—"the betrayer" or "he who betrays." The construction here should not be translated, "he who is betraying" or "he who is continuing to betray" since Judas's act of betrayal was a onetime, past event by this point in Matthew 27. He was even remorseful afterward for this sinful act, though he was still not repentant in the sense of changing his mind by believing in Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour. Judas's single act of betrayal earned him the infamous title in Scripture of "the betrayer" or "he who betrays," even after his onetime deed was accomplished.

> Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days [ὁ καταλύων... καὶ... οἰκοδομῶν], save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt 27:38–40).

Here in Matthew 27:40, the crowd gathered around Jesus at His crucifixion mocks Him by recounting His prophetic prediction from the beginning of His public ministry when He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). As John 2:20–22 goes on to explain, this statement referred to His crucifixion and bodily resurrection. Ironically, Jesus proved Himself to be the true Christ and Son of God by *not* coming down off the cross but staying there to die and pay for mankind's sin. But in Matthew 27:40 (and in Mark 15:29), the unbelieving crowd jeeringly calls Jesus "the one who destroys... and... builds" (ὁ καταλύων... καὶ... οἰκοδομῶν).

This use of the present tense form of the participle with the article clearly shows that Jesus was not habitually or continually destroying and building (i.e., dying and rising), since His death and resurrection were singular events that each took place within the stated timespan of "three days."

> And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping [ὁ ἐμβαπτόμενος] bread into the dish with me" (Mark 14:18–20).

Mark 14:20 uses the present tense, articular participle construction "he who dips" (ὁ ἐμβαπτόμενος) to identify Judas Iscariot as the betrayer. There are two reasons why the Lord could not possibly have meant "he who continually or habitually dips." First, the context establishes that the dipping took place during one meal, one particular evening. Second, the parallel passage in John's Gospel clarifies even further that Jesus was referring to only one particular dipping gesture that evening. John 13:26 says, "'It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.' So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot."

> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out [τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον] for many" (Mark 14:23–24).

In Mark 14:24, the Lord Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper and refers to His sacrificial blood that will be "poured out" the next day on the cross. The present tense, articular participle construction τὸ

ἐκχυννόμενον cannot possibly refer to a continual, habitual action since Christ's "pouring out" of His blood occurred once and for all as a finished event the following day when He died on the cross.

> And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born [τὸ γεννώμενον] will be called holy—the Son of God" (Luke 1:34–35).

In Luke 1:35, the Lord Jesus is described as that Holy One "to be born" (τὸ γεννώμενον). The present tense form of the substantival, articular participle obviously cannot mean that Jesus is being "continually or habitually born" since birth by its very nature is a onetime, momentary event.

> Everyone who divorces his wife and marries [ὁ ἀπολύων… καὶ γαμῶν] another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery (Luke 16:18).

In Luke 16:18, the substantival expression "everyone who divorces... and marries" contains two participles (ἀπολύων and γαμῶν) in their present tense form preceded by the same article (ὁ). These present tense, articular participles function substantively and cannot possibly be denoting continuous, habitual action for two reasons. First, the very nature of the act of divorce is momentary or punctiliar as a legal, judicial decision. Second, the acts of divorce and marriage are opposite of one another and cannot occur concurrently and continuously. It is not possible to be continuously and habitually divorcing one's wife, just as it is impossible to be continuously and habitually marrying one's wife. Divorce and marriage are momentary, instantaneous acts.

> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes [ὁ πιστεύων] in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming [ὁ ἐρχόμενος] into the world" (John 11:25–27).

This passage contains two significant uses of the present tense, articular participle construction. In the second instance, Martha describes Jesus as he "who is coming [ὁ ἐρχόμενος] into the world." Since Jesus had already come into the world at this point in John's narrative, interpreting the present tense here with linear *Aktionsart* ("he who is continually coming" into the world) results in an historical anachronism and ignores the fact that this phrase is being used as a messianic title for the One who fulfilled centuries of prophetic prediction and anticipation by Old Testament saints. See also the use of ὁ ἐρχόμενος in Matthew 11:3, where it is clearly a messianic title.[42]

> By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer [ὁ ὀλοθρεύων] of the firstborn might not touch them (Heb 11:28).

In this description of Moses and the Israelites keeping the Passover by faith, the present tense participle form of the verb ὀλοθρεύω ("destroy") is used with the article to form a substantival, articular

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[42] The title ὁ ἐρχόμενος is especially pronounced in John 7:25–44 where it occurs four times as the crowd in Jerusalem muses over Jesus' possible messianic status; see Mavis M. Leung, *The Kingship-Cross Interplay in the Gospel of John: Jesus' Death as Corroboration of His Royal Messiahship* (Portland, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 160. For use of this title as messianic, see Michael F. Bird, *Are You the One Who Is to Come? The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009); Robert M. Bowman, Jr., and J. Ed Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 181; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 324; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 319.

participle construction (ὁ ὀλοθρεύων). Though it contains the present tense form, the title "Destroyer" or phrase "he who destroyed" (NKJV) is clearly not indicating an action occurring in the present which is why it is translated in the past tense. Nor is the statement "he who destroyed the firstborn" indicating an act of destruction that is continual or habitual since this is an unmistakable reference to a single, unparalleled event of destruction by God in Israel's ancient past, viz. the tenth plague against the Egyptians recorded in Exodus 11–12.

These eight New Testament examples of the present tense, articular participle are sufficient to show that a phrase such as "he who believes" (ὁ πιστεύων) in John's Gospel does not necessarily indicate continuous, habitual, persevering faith. Many similar examples from the New Testament could be given, but these eight are selected specifically for two reasons. First, each example is framed by contextual clues or markers that give information about the time of action and/or kind of action completely apart from the grammatical form of the present tense, articular participle itself. Second, these examples are chosen because they do not involve the word πιστεύων and are therefore theologically neutral with respect to the issue of perseverance in the faith.[43] Although these eight examples are non-theological with respect to faith, they provide ample proof that the grammatical construction in the phrase "he who believes" (ὁ πιστεύων) does not inherently indicate continuous, linear belief. Instead, identical grammatical constructions function as substantival nouns without reference to time or even kind of action. Therefore, the nominal phrase ὁ πιστεύων describes one who either has believed at some point in the past, or who believes at some point in the present, or

[43] For all other New Testament passages containing the present tense, articular participle form of the verb *πιστεύω* used as a substantival participle, see Matt 18:6; Mark 9:23, 42; John 3:15, 16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:35, 40, 47; 7:38; 11:25, 26; 12:44, 46; 14:12; 17:20; Acts 2:44; 10:43; 13:39; 22:19; Rom 1:16; 3:22; 4:11, 24; 9:33; 10:4, 11; 1 Cor 1:21; 14:22; Gal 3:22; Eph 1:19; 1 Thess 1:7; 2:10, 13; 1 John 5:1, 5, 10, 13; 1 Pet 2:6, 7.

who will believe at some point in the future, without denoting anything in itself about ongoing belief.[44]

Aorist Tense of Πιστεύω

Those who teach that the present tense must indicate continual or habitual belief often make a similar unfounded claim regarding the use of the aorist tense of πιστεύω. They sometimes say that there are no examples of πιστεύω in the aorist tense in eternal salvation contexts[45] or that such instances occur so infrequently compared to the present tense that we must conclude that the New Testament writers used the present tense predominantly to make a theological point about the ongoing nature of true "saving faith."[46] But both of these claims are demonstrably false.

In terms of frequency of usage, of the ninety-eight occurrences of πιστεύω in John's Gospel, thirty-two are in the aorist tense.[47] Though the present tense uses of πιστεύω in John outnumber the aorist, it is only by a ratio of two to one, which is hardly significant enough to justify a major theological distinction based on differing tense form usage. Furthermore, the aorist tense form of πιστεύω is used several times in key evangelistic, salvation passages in John's Gospel.

> John 1:7: "He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe [πιστεύσωσιν] through him." This verse declares that the main purpose of John the Baptist's ministry was to bear witness to the Savior so "that all might believe through him." This is an evangelistic use of the aorist form of πιστεύω.

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[44] For further discussion on the *Aktionsart* of pisteuvw, see Chay and Correia, *The Faith that Saves,* 45–53.
[45] Turner and Mantey, *Gospel According to John*, 99.
[46] Wallace, *Greek Grammar,* 621 n. 22.
[47] John 1:7; 2:11, 22, 23; 4:39, 41, 48, 50, 53; 6:30; 7:31, 39, 48; 8:24, 30; 9:18, 36; 10:42; 11:15, 40, 42, 45; 12:38, 42; 13:19; 14:29; 17:8; 19:35; 20:8, 25, 29, 31.

John 2:11: "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed [ἐπίστευσαν] in him." This verse refers to Jesus' first sign-miracle in the Gospel of John, where He turns water into wine. In response to this sign, 2:11 says, "His disciples believed in him." According to the purpose statement for the entire book in 20:30–31, the miraculous signs done by the Lord were recorded in John's Gospel to lead readers evangelistically to "believe" in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and have eternal life.

John 8:24: "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe [πιστεύσητε] that I am he, you will die in your sins." Here the Lord Jesus warns His audience that a failure to identify Him as the "I am" (ἐγώ εἰμι; i.e., the God of Israel) would result in dying in one's sins—dying unsaved. This is clearly evangelistic.

John 12:42: "Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed [ἐπίστευσαν] in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue." This verse uses the aorist tense for "believed" to describe genuine believers, who in the immediate context (12:37–40) are contrasted with unbelievers.

John 19:35: "He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe [πιστεύσητε]." John 20:31: "but these are written so that you may believe [πιστεύσητε] that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." All but five surviving Greek manuscripts have the aorist tense form of "believe" in 19:35 and 20:31. These two verses are the only places in the entire book where John the narrator breaks through the story to directly address the readers, using the second-person pronoun "you." In doing so, he gives an evangelistic invitation to the readers to "believe," using the aorist tense.

Besides these significant uses of πιστεύω in the aorist tense in eternal salvation contexts in John's Gospel, several other verses use aorist tense verbs for "received" (1:12), "drinks" (4:14), and "eat"

(6:53),[48] all as synonyms for belief in Christ.[49] John 1:12 is particularly significant since it uses both the aorist and present tenses: "But to all who did receive [ἔλαβον] him, who believed [τοῖς πιστεύουσιν] in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." The phrase "who believed" (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν) is another instance of the present tense, substantival participle of πιστεύω; but it stands in appositional relationship to those "who did receive" (ἔλαβον),[50] which is an aorist tense verb. This effectively equates the aorist tense verb with the present tense participle πιστεύουσιν. The claim that the present tense portrays ongoing belief in contrast to the aorist tense is disproven by this verse since it semantically equates the action of receiving (aorist tense) Christ with believing (present tense) in His name.

Michael Bird provides a more accurate and up-to-date perspective on the significance of tenses as they relate to John's depiction of the act or state of believing:

> The tense of the verb alone will not tell you whether the type of belief is initial or continual. The tense-form, either aorist or present, does not give us any grounds for supposing that John is talking about belief caused by evangelism (i.e. conversion) or belief reinforced through teaching (i.e. discipleship). The evangelist can use either tense-form of πιστεύω to signify coming to faith or continuing in the faith... The present tense-form highlights the general state of believing, not the persistence of belief.[51]

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[48] David Gibson, "Eating Is Believing? On Midrash and the Mixing of Metaphors in John 6," *Themelios* 27 (Spring 2002): 5–15.
[49] Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Gospel of John: A Complete Analytical Exposition,* rev. ed. (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1965), 135.
[50] Charles C. Bing, "The Condition for Salvation in John's Gospel," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 9 (Spring 1996): 31.
[51] Michael F. Bird, *Jesus Is the Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 136.

CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to follow the literal, grammatical, historical method of interpretation of John's Gospel with respect to the condition of belief in Jesus Christ for eternal life. When key salvation verses in the book are interpreted contextually, coupled with a correct understanding of Greek grammar, the conclusion is clear that the requirement for everlasting life is a single moment of faith in Jesus Christ rather than continual belief.

This conclusion leads to two important spiritual applications. First, this conclusion leads to greater personal assurance of one's salvation. Rather than assurance waiting until one has faithfully persevered to the end of life, assurance may be possessed immediately at the moment of initial faith. Second, our evangelistic message is affected in the sense that the condition of eternal salvation will simply be faith in Christ, rather than faithfulness to Christ. As a result, the focus of our message will be on the proper object of faith, Jesus Christ and His finished work, rather than a person's subjective faithfulness and perseverance.

4
Does James Make Works a Criterion for Eternal Life?

Paul Miles

The Bible is clear: eternal life is a free gift through faith alone in Christ alone. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Paul agrees when he writes, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph 2:8–9).

Then, there is James, who writes, "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone" (Jas 2:24) and "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (Jas 2:17) and "even the demons believe" (Jas 2:19). What should be done with these passages? Some sceptics say that James and Paul are contradicting each other,[1] but this is a clear rejection of biblical inerrancy. Others say that there is a dispensational distinction that allows James to teach a different means of salvation,[2]

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[1] For example, see Andreas Lindemann, *Paulus im ältesten Christentum: das Bild des Apostels und die Rezeption der paulinischen Theologie in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Marcion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979), 248. Cited by Bart Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 295.

[2] This interpretation is uncommon. Even many who read James as a pre-church age epistle see that James is not speaking of a works-based justification before God. See, for example, Charles Baker, *A Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Grace Publications), 426–7.

but the Scriptures are clear that salvation has always been through faith. Still others respond by trying to redefine *faith* to mean *faith plus works*,[3] but this only ends in works as a condition for salvation and conflicts with many other passages.

James 2:14–26 has become a theological watershed that divides theologians over soteriology, hermeneutics, and indeed even apologetics. This writer's perspective is that the biblical authors are never in conflict as they all share the Holy Spirit as Coauthor. Starting with this assumption, we can construct an analogy of faith[4] that is based on a grammatical-historical reading of all relevant Scriptures, such that easier texts inform us of nuances in difficult texts.[5] There is more than one way to interpret this difficult passage and still adhere to faith alone in Christ alone, but the approach offered here will emphasize word studies of "save," "justify," and "alone" as well as their application to different phases of a believer's life.

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[3] Roy Aldrich, "Some Simple Difficulties of Salvation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 111, no. 442 (April 1954): 166–8.

[4] No discussion on James is complete without mentioning Luther's "epistle of straw" comment. The analogy of faith is relevant here. One theologian notes: Luther and some of his students of the sixteenth century criticized the Epistle of James to oppose Roman Catholic interpretations that sought to undermine the *analogia fidei* as revealed in the canonical Scriptures. Against Roman Catholic opponents who argued that James teaches justification by works and thus not justification by faith alone, Luther and his students maintained that James cannot, and in fact does not, undermine the clear teachings of Paul or any other biblical author. From Luther's perspective, if his Roman Catholic opponents could not understand the clear and simple words of St. Paul, that one is justified by faith without works, why bother explaining a more nuanced passage from James? The doctrinal disagreement between Lutherans and Catholics was not personal opinion, but ultimately due to a varying and radically divergent biblical hermeneutic. Jason Lane, *Luther's Epistle of Straw: The Voice of St. James in Reformation Preaching* (Berlin: De Gruyter, Inc., 2017). Accessed November 12, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central. Created from Manchester on 2020-11-12 08:54:41. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110535747-007.

[5] This concept is often referred to as קַל וָחֹמֶר by the Hebraist or *Argumentum a fortiori* by the Latinist.

CONTEXT AND SUMMARY

The thrust of the Epistle of James is expressed in the words, "Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (Jas 1:21–22). To save the soul is to save someone's physical life from death,[6] so while James' believing audience is already eternally secure, failure to "be doers of the word" could go so far as to actually kill them. Earlier, James warns that "sin when it is fully grown brings forth death" (1:15), and he concludes his letter with "whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul [σώσει ψυχὴν "he will save his physical life"] from death" (5:20).

James wants the members of the early Jewish Christian diaspora to take care of each other. He begins chapter 2 by using the sin of partiality as an example of being hearers but not doers. In 2:1–7, he talks about the sin itself, and in 2:8–13, he explains that if someone commits this sin (or any other, for that matter) then he has transgressed the entire law. This is the context that leads up to the controversial section that opens with an example of partiality against him who "is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food" (Jas 2:15). James urges Christians to control their tongues, which in

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[6] The Greek word for "soul" is ψυχή, which corresponds with the Hebrew word, נֶפֶשׁ, meaning "life," hence the idiom in Genesis 35:18, בְּצֵאת נַפְשָׁהּ כִּי מֵתָה ἐν τῷ ἀφιέναι αὐτὴν τὴν ψυχήν, ἀπέθνησκε γάρ (LXX) "her soul was departing (for she was dying)" (ESV). When Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were in Egypt, the Lord told Joseph in a dream to return to Israel τεθνήκασι γὰρ οἱ ζητοῦντες τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ παιδίου "for those who sought the child›s life are dead" (Matt 2:20b ESV). Zane Hodges writes: "it can be said that there is not a single place in the New Testament where the expression 'to save the soul' ever means final salvation from hell. It cannot be shown that any native Greek speaker would have understood this expression in any other than the idiomatic way. That is, he would understand it as signifying 'to save the life.'" Zane Hodges, "The Gospel Under Siege," in *A Free Grace Primer*, ed. Robert Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2011), 3911–3, Kindle.

a community setting involves watching for sparks that could cause forest fires.[7] In short, the context before and after the controversial "faith without works" passage indicates that the text is not discussing eternal life, but rather gives instructions to the diaspora community on how to take care of one another. Judging solely by the context, one would anticipate that this section has nothing to do with gaining (much less maintaining) eternal life, and everything to do with how a community, which is at risk of sinning itself to death, can protect itself by helping each other.

Before moving forward, it is worth backing up a few verses to consider the judgment that James has in mind when he writes, "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgement is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement" (Jas 2:12–13). Some would have that this is the final judgment, making works conditional or meritorious for final salvation.[8] Some take this as the Judgment Seat of Christ for rewarding believers,[9] which allows for the faith alone in Christ alone view of salvation. It is true that James' believing audience

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[7] Pheme Perkins, "Tongue on Fire: Ethics of Speech in James" *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 74:4 (October 2020): 373.

[8] C. Ryan Jenkins cites some variants of this view to include: Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (St. Louis: Herder, 1964), 354; E. H. Plumptre, *The General Epistle of St. James* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1878), 75; James Hardy Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1916), 34–5; E. C. Blackman, *The Epistle of James* (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1957), 93; and J. T. Sanders, *Ethics in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 115–8. Cited in C. Ryan Jenkins, "Faith and Works in Paul and James," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159, no. 633 (January 2002): 62–78.

[9] Robert Wilkin is a proponent of this view, though he agrees (pg. 10) that "In light of the other uses of *sōzō* in James, one should at least be open to the possibility that temporal salvation is in view in Jas 2:14 as well." The original version of this paper took the Judgment Seat view, and I am indebted to Thomas Stegall and Eric Bush for their gracious feedback that has helped me reformulate this nuance, as well as Kenneth Yates who holds to Wilkin's view but discussed the matter with grace as well. Robert N. Wilkin, "Another View of Faith and Works in James 2," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, 15, no. 2 (Autumn, 2002): 3–21.

would eventually stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ[10] and it is likely that the Judgment Seat of Christ will also consider mercy, but a preferred possibility is that the judgment that James references is temporal, not eschatological.[11] James is giving his audience practical wisdom for today. He wants his audience to watch or judge each other, so he expresses the same sentiment that is found in the Sermon on the Mount,[12] "For with the judgement you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you" (Matt 7:2). As Christians safeguard each other, it is important that their speech be seasoned with mercy lest they fall into hypocrisy. Whether this judgment is in reference to current relationships or whether it is deferred to the future judgment for rewards is not

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[10] The Epistle of James was likely written very early, so it is possible that the audience was not familiar with the reference to the "Judgment Seat of Christ" per se, as this is Pauline terminology. However, the doctrine of rewards is not dependent solely on post-James texts as Christ Himself taught it and indeed even Pharisaic doctrine had a tendency "to defer the actual reward, whatever it might be, to the future life." R. Travers Herford, *The Pharisees* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), 130. For notes on dating James, see William Varner, *James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Dallas, TX: Fontes Press, 2017), 1010–100, Kindle.

[11] Dispensationalism is not necessary to maintain a soteriology of faith alone in Christ alone in light of James 2, since temporal judgment fits in any eschatological scheme. However, if the interpreter holds to eschatological overtones here, then it is helpful to recognize the distinction between the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Great White Throne Judgment, which is a distinction that many theologians, including dispensationalists, recognize. General Judgment Theory can be especially dangerous in James 2 if it is taken eschatologically. For example, the Roman Catholic commentator, Franz Mussner's declaration, "Der ‚Perfektionismus' des Jak ist ein eschatologischer!" presupposes the Roman Catholic theory of general judgment that combines the Judgment Seat of Christ with the Great White Throne Judgment, such that believers are cast in the Lake of Fire for their lack of works. This is contrary to the clear teaching that because the believer is already perfected in Christ, his maturity is currently a work in progress and this maturity serves as a basis for future Christian judgement for reward, not condemnation. Franz Mußner, *Der Jakobusbrief* (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1987), 67.

[12] For more similarities between the Epistle of James and the Sermon on the Mount, see Virgil V. Porter Jr. "The Sermon on the Mount in the Book of James, Part 1" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162, no. 647 (July 2005), 344–60 and "Part 2" in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162, no. 648 (Oct 2005), 470–82.

particularly significant to the final conclusion; what is most important for the time being is that final salvation from eternal damnation is not at all what James has in mind here.

FOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE WORD "SAVE"

> So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgement is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement. What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? (Jas 2:12–14).

The ESVUK renders "Can that faith save him?" and the NIV steps further with "Can such faith save them?" but the Greek text does not actually have the pronoun, "that," in this passage, hence the translation, "Can faith save him?" in the KJV and others. An article occurs here (ἡ πίστις), but while the article is also present in eight out of the eleven occurrences of "faith" in James, only in James 2:14 does the ESVUK render "that" to modify "faith."[13] Interpreters should realize that the "attempt to single out 2:14 for specialized treatment carries its own refutation on its face. It must be classed as a *truly desperate* effort to support an insupportable interpretation."[14]

Recent research in the field of Augustinian Studies has demonstrated that the dissection of "faith" into various types likely started with Augustine as he appealed to James 2:18–20 in development of

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[13] Indeed, Wallace, while critiquing Hodges' translation that is mentioned below, concedes that the article with πίστις is anaphoric in the rest of the chapter. Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 219.

[14] Zane Hodges, *The Epistle of James: Proven Character through Testing* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1994), 60.

his anti-Donatist rhetoric.[15] During the Reformation and Post-Reformation eras, theologians divided faith into *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*,[16] which became a theological device for softening Augustine's theology of Works-Assisted Merit into works as a non-meritorious condition. Perhaps something of this sort is what the English translators had in mind when translating "that faith," which is unfortunate. The point is not that there is a particular nonsalvific faith that cannot save in this situation, as if there is another type of faith that could save. Rather, James is saying that *no faith can save*. In fact, the Greek question is posed negatively to elicit a negative response (μὴ δύναται ἡ πίστις σῶσαι αὐτόν;), such that one proposed translation is, "Faith can't save him, can it?"[17]

This is by no means a contradiction with Paul, John, Jesus, Moses, or any other biblical author, none of whom ever indicates that faith is meritorious for salvation. Rather, faith is a nonmeritorious condition for salvation, so this should be a clear flag that James is not speaking of justification before God.

The range of *meaning* for σώζω is rather narrow; it basically means to "preserve or rescue," but can have an array of applications for anything from "natural dangers and afflictions" to "mortal danger" to "eternal death" or even just to "*keep*, *preserve* in good condition."[18] Therefore, the word, "save," should conjure several questions from the reader, among them: Who or what is being saved? What is he being saved from? Who is saving? How is He saving?

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[15] Kenneth Wilson, "Reading James 2:18–20 with Anti-Donatist Eyes: Untangling Augustine's Exegetical Legacy" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 139, no. 2 (2020): 385–407.

[16] Otto Kirn, "Faith," in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1909), 4:268–70.

[17] Hodges, *The Epistle of James*, 60.

[18] Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), σώζω.

Consider a biblical example from Ephesians 2:8–9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." Who has been saved? "You," which means the saints who are in Ephesus (Eph 1:1). What have they been saved from? From being "dead in the trespasses and sins" (2:1, 5) and from the eternal separation from God that is the result of this death. Who has saved? "It is the gift of God." How has God saved them? "By grace… through faith."

The salvation in Ephesians 2:8–9 is the best news ever! Well-intentioned interpreters are rightly excited about this message, but incorrectly apply this salvation to other passages where it does not always fit. In Acts 27, Paul is with soldiers and a centurion on a ship that is about to crash, and the sailors who are sailing the ship are ready to abandon it and let it crash. Verse 31 reads: "Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, 'Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.'"

Who will be saved? The centurion and the soldiers. What will they be saved from? Crashing into rocks and drowning. Who will save? The soldiers. How will they save them? By staying on the ship and keeping it from crashing. The word, "save," still means "to rescue," but there is a vast difference in application between Ephesians 2:8–9 and Acts 27:31.

With the suggested modification in James 2:14, the verse now reads: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Faith can't save him, can it?"

Who is being saved? "Someone," more specifically, someone from the audience, which consists of Jewish believers in the diaspora (Jas 1:1), whom James calls "brothers" fifteen times.[19] These are people who already have the salvation that is discussed in Ephesians 2:8–9, so they do not need that salvation, but another salvation from something else. Who or what will save? Faith. Since faith cannot give

[19] Jas 1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9–10; 5:12, 19.

anyone eternal life—faith is non-meritorious; only God can give eternal life—this is another red flag that the salvation in James 2:14 is different from the salvation in Ephesians 2:8–9. What is the person being saved from? As seen a few verses earlier, he is being saved from a life that is characterized by justice rather than mercy (Jas 2:12–13). In light of the whole epistle, this could feed back into James 1:21, such that "obedience to God's Word can 'save' the life from the deadly outcome of sin."[20] How will faith save him? Actually, in this case, faith cannot save him. That is the point. Works could have been effective, but since they are missing, this person could fall into sin's destructive pattern that could put him in an early grave. James's salvation here must be entirely different from the salvation that Paul wrote about to the Church in Ephesus, which is "not a result of works" (Eph 2:9).

The first mistake that people make when reading James 2:14–26 is to ascribe a different meaning to "save" than what the author intends.[21] This salvation is not from eternal separation from God but is in reference to the Christian's life on earth, not the Great White Throne Judgment, where believers will never be judged. Though the believer in Christ has already been saved from eternal condemnation, he can still fall into sin that has serious consequences.

WHAT IS DEAD FAITH?

> If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead (Jas 2:15–17).

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[20] Hodges, *The Epistle of James*, 61.

[21] We may disagree in some conclusions, but Lebedev brings out this point well. Владимир Лебедев, «Послание Якова» *Славянский Библейский Комментарий* Сергей Санников ред. (ЕААА, 2016), 1461–2.

After God saves someone as a response to his faith alone in Christ alone, what good does his faith *alone* do him? Faith does not keep him saved; that is God's work (John 10:28–29). Faith alone does not save him from missing the opportunity to gain rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ; after all, faith alone is why he will appear at that judgment. Faith alone does not prevent someone from sins such as slander; it can take much effort to control the tongue. There is a sense in which the instant after someone is saved, his faith alone becomes useless. It is *dead*.

This is not to say that the Christian life is lived by works, not faith. Dwight Pentecost puts it well, that "James wrote to show how faith could produce a righteousness that would please God in every area and situation of life. In short, if they lived by faith, they would produce the righteousness of the Law."[22] In other words, Christian decision-making is driven by faith in Christian doctrine. The doctrine itself is not the action, but rather is the rationale behind the action.

James builds this argument using the example of partiality, a sin with which his audience is struggling (Jas 2:1–13). The social justice agenda has caused some theologians to overstate this, making equity with the poor "a primary emphasis (if not *the* primary emphasis)" of James.[23] Christian growth is the greater theme here, but partiality no doubt hinders growth. Sin does not hinder salvation, as all sin was placed on Jesus, who knew no sin, so that in Him sinners could become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21), but saved men still live with sinful flesh and commit sinful deeds (Rom 7:13–20). It follows, then, that saved people could still struggle with grievous sins, even the sin of partiality. James addresses this sin, not so much for the sake

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[22] J. Dwight Pentecost, *Faith that Endures: A Practical Commentary on the Book of Hebrews*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2000), 70, Kindle.
[23] LeAnn Snow Flesher, "Mercy triumphs over judgment: James as the social gospel" *Review and Expositor* 115:3 (August, 2018): 403.

of the poor (though, they certainly would benefit), nor to ensure the salvation of his audience (whom he so readily and repeatedly recognizes as believers), but rather to help his readers grow.

James explains how useless faith alone after salvation is to solving the partiality problem. He poses the question, "If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?" (Jas 2:15–16).

"Go in peace" is a common Jewish farewell,[24] and this man adds the pious, "be warmed and filled," to which one commentator rightly critiques that this, "is a remarkably heartless and foolish statement, by which James indicates an attitude of total disregard for the welfare of others to the point of absurdity... while having no intention of being a channel for that care."[25]

The answer is obvious that in this situation, faith does not do any good! As Tony Evans writes, "James isn't deriding the spiritual; he's simply insisting that it's not enough. If a brother is hungry, he doesn't need a sermon. He needs a ham sandwich!"[26] Salvation from hell is simply through faith alone in Christ alone, but helping people with physical needs is hard work. Theologians are free to suppose that "justification must and will invariably produce works appropriate to the nature of the new creature,"[27] but they cannot accurately exegete this from the "dead faith" text of James 2. Indeed, this passage indicates the opposite by giving an example of a new creature that is exhibiting dead faith!

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[24] Judg 18:6; 1 Sam 20:42; Jdth. 8:35; Jub. 12:29; Mark 5:34; et al.
[25] John F. MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: James*, PC Study Bible Version (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), Jas 2:15–17.
[26] Tony Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary: Advancing God's Kingdom Agenda* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2019), 2228.
[27] Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 973.

AN OBJECTION

> But someone will say… Do you want to be shown, you foolish person… (Jas 2:18a, 20a)[28]

Having demonstrated that faith alone will not help those who are already regenerate, James knows that somebody will invent an excuse to get out of work. He responds to this sham by presenting an imaginary objector, "But someone will say…" and then responding with "Do you want to be shown, you foolish person…" This is an example of a Greek rhetorical device that is called, "a diatribe." One secular literary critic describes the diatribe as an "internally dialogued rhetorical genre that is usually constructed in the form of a conversation with an absent converser."[29] This literary device is quite common in ancient Jewish and Christian literature[30] to the extent that "it was the diatribe, not the classical rhetoric, that had the defining influence on the genre features of the ancient Christian sermon."[31]

This diatribe has been the topic of much confusion for at least three reasons. First, when James wrote this, quotation marks had not yet been invented, so modern readers often have difficulty deciding where the objection ends.[32] Second, theological presuppo-

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[28] Author's translation. Ἀλλ᾽ ἐρεῖ τις… Θέλεις δὲ γνῶναι, ὦ ἄνθρωπε κενέ... More complete translation with notes below.

[29] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Проблемы Творчества Достоевского*, in *Собрание сочиненийб* S. G. Bocharov, A. A. Gogonishvili, eds. (Moscow: Институт мировой литературы им. А. М. Горького, 2002), 6:135. Author's translation.

[30] Cf. 1 Cor 15:35–36; Rom 9:19–20; 4 Macc. 2:24–3:1; Shep. 3.8–9.

[31] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Проблемы Творчества Достоевского*, in *Собрание сочиненийб* S. G. Bocharov, A. A. Gogonishvili, eds. (Moscow: Институт мировой литературы им. А. М. Горького, 2002), 6:135. Author's translation.

[32] Though her conclusions disagree with those in this article, Jane Heath presents several views and issues, demonstrating well that this is not an easy text in Jane Heath, "The Righteous Gentile Interjects (James 2:18-19 and Romans 2:14-15)" *Novum Testamentum* 55:3 (2013): 272–95.

sitions, even if they are correct, can impede Bible study and deter exegetes from finding the meaning of the text. Third, this is a hypothetical objection from an imaginary sluggard—it is intended to be deceptive!

To better understand the objector's point, one may consider the context before the objection and then James's response. Before the hypothetical objection, James writes about how being doers of the word will help others (Jas 2:15–17). His response to the objection starts with "Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?"[33] (Jas 2:20). Calling the objector, "you foolish person," serves as a marker to let the audience know that the foolish objector has stopped speaking. James then gives two examples of Jewish heroes who are respected to this day because of their works.

What kind of an objection would be found *after* a statement that works will help others and *before* a response that works can make someone a hero? Perhaps it could be a foolish objection that downplays works to the effect of, "We agree that we are saved through faith alone, which nobody can see. And even if someone has works that we can see, we still do not necessarily know his doctrine. Since works, therefore, do not display doctrine, we may as well keep our faith and our works to ourselves."

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[33] A textual variant here could support that the "dead faith" in vv. 17, 26 is simply "useless faith," rather than "faith that was never alive" as some would have. Bruce Metzger testifies of the UBS Committee's decision: Instead of ἀργή the Textus Receptus reads νεκρά, with ℵ A C^2 K P ψ 614 1241 *Byz Lect* $syr^{p,h}$ cop^{bo} *al*. Since there is considerable suspicion that scribes may have introduced the latter word from either ver. 17 or 26, the Committee preferred ἀργή which not only is strongly supported by B C* 322 323 945 1739 it^{ff} vg cop^{53} arm, but may also involve a subtle play on words (ἔργων ἀργή [ἀ·ἔργή]). The singular error of $\mathfrak{P}^{74}$ (κενή) was suggested by the preceding κενέ. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (4th rev. ed.), 2nd ed., PC Study Bible Version (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), Jas 2:20.

Rereading the objection with the broader context in mind helps:

> But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works. Show me your faith by your works and likewise I'll show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one and you do well, but even the demons both believe and shudder." Do you want to be shown … (Jas 2:18–20a)[34]

The hypothetical sluggard challenges James, "Show me your faith by your works" (Jas 2:18). Since he is confident that James cannot show his doctrine by his works, the objector even makes a bet, "and likewise I'll show you my faith by my works." To further support this notion, the objector compares James to demons. This came at a time in history when explicit demonic activity was common and visible, as seen in the earlier life of Christ and the contemporary ministries of the apostles,[35] so the allegation carried even more punch then than it does today. James, like all Christians, believes that God is one.

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[34] Author's translation. Ἀλλ᾽ ἐρεῖ τις, Σὺ πίστιν ἔχεις, κἀγὼ ἔργα ἔχω· δεῖξόν μοι τὴν πίστιν σου ἐκ τῶν ἔργων σου, κἀγώ δείξω σοι ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μου τὴν πίστιν μου. Σὺ πιστεύεις ὅτι ὁ θεός εἷς ἐστιν· καλῶς ποιεῖς· καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν, καὶ φρίσσουσιν. Θέλεις δὲ γνῶναι… Notice that the objector's challenge, according to Majority Text (𝔐), is for both sides to show faith by (ἐκ) his (μου, "my" or σου, "your") works (των εργων). Also notice that the rebuke in James 2:20 "Do you want to be shown, you foolish person" follows a common format for responding to a hypothetical objector (cf. 1 Cor 15:35–36; Rom 9:19–20; 4 Mac. 2:24–3:1; Shep. 3:8–9). Furthermore, ending the objection at the end of James 2:19 prompts the most logical response. "The demons believe and shudder" is an odd response to "let's compare our works." "Let's compare works, the demons believe and shudder" is an odd response to "You have faith and I have works." The cleanest break to make would be right after the demon statement before James calls the objector foolish. For a defence of the 𝔐 reading here, see Zane C. Hodges, "Light on James Two from Textual Criticism," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 120, no. 480 (Oct 1963): 341–50.

[35] Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament*, PC Study Bible Version (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1989), Jas 2:18–19.

Demons know this as well.[36] Regardless of their same belief,[37] they have two different outcomes. James does well, that is, he has good works spawning from his freedom in Christ, whereas the demons can only shudder in fear as they anticipate their judgment. A common response to the message of salvation through faith alone in Christ alone is that even demons believe, but this response actually argues *against James* by quoting his hypothetical objector, albeit generally with good intentions that are based on a misunderstanding of the Greek diatribe. The imaginary objector supposes that he has proven that faith cannot bring about works that show anything substantial.[38] This objection is nonsense, so James responds in the following verses to show that works are necessary to prove that someone is a friend of God.

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[36] Some appeal to the demon's faith as evidence that faith is not sufficient for salvation, since it does not save the demons. This is a poor argument from this passage for at least three reasons: (1) The faith here is simply that God is one (or, according to some manuscripts, that there is one God). This is a fundamental doctrine, but by no means carries the entirety of the gospel message. (2) This passage is not talking about eternal life. The objector could have made the same point by presenting as evidence another man who has faith like James, but even greater works. Either way, there is one faith but different works as a result. (3) Christ's sacrifice atones for the sins of the world (John 1:29). This sin entered the world through Adam and is therefore taken away from all who are born in Adam, that is, mankind (Rom 5:12–14). Regardless of their faith, demons have never been in Adam, and so Christ's propitiation is useless to them.

[37] Some have tried to indicate that the word "believe" in James 2:19 is in contrast to saving "trust." This simply does not work as the verb πιστεύω here is the same verb that John uses time and time again to teach salvation through believing in Christ. See J. Ronald Blue, "James" in *Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, eds. PC Study Bible Version (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2000), Jas 2:19.

[38] There is disagreement over the nature of the objection, but this does not necessarily change the thrust of what James is saying. For an alternate interpretation of the objection that still ends with fundamentally the same Faith Alone in Christ Alone view, see Moses Onwubiko, *James: Faith Without Works is Dead an Urgent Call to Practical Christianity* (Nashville, TN: Grace Evangelistic Ministries, 2011), 207–18.

A SECOND JUSTIFICATION BEFORE MEN

> Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead (Jas 2:20–26).

This passage appeals to the life of Abraham to show that one must have works for other people to notice that he is "a friend of God," but many biblical interpreters have stumbled over the ways in which James and Paul use the word, "justified." The New Perspective on Paul likely has done much more harm than good, but one such proponent begins well when he points out with regards to James that "Problems only arise if we fail to distinguish between justification and regeneration."[39] The New Perspective's erroneous application of the word, "justification,"[40] along with other differences, still lands it in a vastly different soteriological position, so perhaps

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[39] N.T. Wright, "Justification: The Biblical Basis and its Relevance for Contemporary Evangelicalism" in *The Great Acquittal: Justification by Faith and Current Christian Thought*, Gavin Reid ed., (London: Collins, 1980), 34.

[40] For a brief response to justification in Calvinism and the New Perspective on Paul, see Robert Wilkin, *The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible* (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2012), 187–8. For a response to some other views of justification, see David Anderson, *Free Grace Soteriology*, 3rd ed. (The Woodlands, TX: Grace Theology Press, 2018), 99–117.

a more biblically developed understanding of the term is in order to prevent confusion.

Before examining James's point about Abraham, it is important to ask a few questions about the word, "justification." Similar to how the word, "save," can refer to different things based on context, the noun, "justification," or the verb, "to justify," can also occur in a variety of contexts.

Sometimes, "justified" refers to the believer's righteous standing before God when he receives eternal life. For example, Paul writes: "yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified" (Gal 2:16).

Notice how strongly Paul emphasizes the freeness of justification here. Now compare it to this occurrence of the word, "justified," from the life of Christ: "And all the people when they heard, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John" (Luke 7:29 ASV).

If the word, "justified," always relates to the second birth, then Luke has men saving God from eternal separation from Himself! Since the word, "justify," simply means to recognize something or someone as being just, or to "treat as just,"[41] then there is no heresy in man justifying God in this regard; indeed, any time that man recognizes orthodox doctrine, he "justifies" God by acknowledging Him as just. Man is able to recognize someone as "just" or "right," just as God can, but clearly, God's justification is much greater than man's justification. Eternal life is granted when God credits His righteousness to a person when he believes in Christ, so there is a justification

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[41] Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), δικαιόω.

that is linked to salvation, but there are many other justifications as well, including the one in Luke 7:29. It should be kept in mind that the "Epistle of James emphasizes the practical side of Christianity and includes only general references to theological issues."[42] Unlike Paul's discourses that explain the nuances of soteriological justification, James uses the term, "justified" in a nontechnical and nonsoteriological sense much like in Luke's narrative.

A careless reading of James might result in readers missing some important words in his argument such that he seems to be in conflict with Paul. Here is a text from Paul alongside James with emphasis on some key phrases:

> *A justification that* is not *by works (Paul):*
>
> For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" (Rom 4:2–3).
>
> *A justification that* is *by works (James):*
>
> Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—**and he was called a friend of God**. You see that a person is justified by works **and not by faith alone**" (Jas 2:21–24).

At a glance, it may seem that James and Paul are in conflict[43] as both quote Genesis 15:6, but upon closer examination, Paul stays in

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[42] Thomas D. Lea and David Alan Black, *The New Testament: Its Background and Message*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2003), 511.

[43] Indeed, some critics of the New Testament have tried to make this point against Christianity. See, for example, Magnus Zetterholm, "'And Abraham believed'. Paul, James, and the Gentiles" *Nordisk Judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies* 24:1–2 (2003), 109–22, accessed January 7, 2021, doi.org/10.30752/nj.69602.

chapter 15, saying that Abraham was justified by faith whereas James goes further to recount chapter 22, saying that Abraham was justified by works. Paul is *only* talking about what happened at the moment when Abraham first believed and received the guarantee of eternal life. James mentions Abraham's faith, but his point is how Abraham became one of Israel's heroes much later. Paul writes about Abraham's justification before God, but James writes about Abraham's justification before men when he was "called a friend of God."

There are two Greek nuances that are worth analyzing here. The first is the Greek correlative conjunctions, καί… καί, which correspond with the English conjunctions, "both… and."[44] When Greek speakers list two items, instead of having the convention of a pair of conjunctions like, "both… and" they simply repeat "and… and." It is likely that James intended a correlative "both… and" in v. 23 with Καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφὴ… καὶ φίλος θεοῦ ἐκλήθη "Both [1] the Scripture was fulfilled… and [2] he was called a friend of God." The Scripture that was fulfilled is Genesis 15:6, which speaks of his justification (being called, "righteous") by God and the second thing that happened is that he was called, "a friend of God," that is, he was justified (called, "righteous") by men. The first justification is why he is in heaven today and the second justification is why he is still hailed as a hero of the faith today (Heb 11:17–19).

The second Greek nuance that is relevant here is the adverb as it relates to word order. In English, "faith alone" is a Protestant term that assumes "alone" to be an adjective that modifies "faith." In the phrase that is translated, "and not by faith alone," the word, "alone," is the Greek word, μόνον, which is either a neuter declination of the adjective, μόνος, or it is an adverb. The Greek noun for "faith" is the feminine πίστις, so "alone" would need to match gender and case,

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[44] Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 672.

but the text is οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως μόνον, *not* οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως μόνης, so μόνον serves as an adverb here, not an adjective. The adverb, μόνον, modifies the earlier verb, δικαιοῦται ("is justified" in ESVUK), which means "that there are *two kinds* of justification, not one kind conditioned on faith *plus* works."[45] Paul qualifies the justification that he discusses as being "before God" (Gal 3:11; Rom 4:2) and "in his sight" (Rom 3:20), but James discusses justification *before men* in addition to justification before God. Greek word orders can sound odd to English speakers, but basically what James is saying is, "You see that a person is not only justified by faith, but there is also a justification by works." This first justification by faith relates back to Abraham's first justification, when he believed God and was justified, and the second justification by works relates to Abraham's justification before men when he offered Isaac on the altar and men called him "a friend of God."

It bears repeating that neither James, nor Paul, nor Moses, nor any other biblical author[46] has ever indicated that Abraham or anyone else has ever received meritorious justification before God by his own works. The medieval rabbi, Nachmanides, speaks against Paul, James, and even Moses when he says of Abraham's sacrifice, "And now it became known in deed, and his merit became complete, and his compensation became full from HaShem, the God of

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[45] Hodges, *The Epistle of James*, 71.

[46] Some extrabiblical sources contradict the Bible by proposing that Abraham's works were meritorious (1 Macc. 2:50–52; Jub. 4:11; Sir. 44:19–21; Mish. Kidd. 4:14). Mishnah Ḳiddushin appeals to Genesis 26:5, which could be a basis for the other texts as well, but this verse does not say that Abraham's works were meritorious. About Genesis 26:1–5, it is worth noting that the context is not Abraham receiving the covenant, which was before his works and will be fulfilled in the future, but rather the context has God promising Isaac temporal security in the land. See Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), 418–20. On reading Romans 4 in light of and response to this misunderstanding, see René Lopez, *Romans Unlocked: Power to Deliver* (Springfield, MO: 21st Century Press, 2005), 85–101.

Israel."[47] It is correct that through Abraham's sacrifice, his fear of God became known, but his merit was never of his own works; it is a gift of God through faith.

One theologian does well to write, "Of course there is no such thing as a single justification by faith *plus* works. Nothing James says suggests that idea. Rather, there are *two kinds* of justification."[48] Another has:

> James, writing of a justification by works (2:14–26), has in view the believer's standing before men; Paul writing of justification by faith (Rom 5:1), has in view the believer's standing before God. Abraham was justified before men in that he proved his faith by his works (James 2:21); likewise he was justified by faith before God on the ground of imputed righteousness (James 2:23).[49]

An appeal to Paul or James to redefine terminology such that "πίστις is man's absolute committal to God"[50] simply falls flat in the example of Abraham. After Abraham's *justification before God*, he has a rough *fellowship with God*. Abraham impregnates Hagar (Gen 16:1–6), laughs at God (Gen 17:15–18) and surrenders his wife to Abimelech (Gen 20:2). It is not until Genesis 22:2 that God presents Abraham with the test, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

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[47] Ramban ועתה נודעה במעשה והיה זכותו שלם ותהי משכורתו שלימה מעם ה' אלהי ישראל on Gen 22:12.

[48] Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege*, 2557, Kindle.

[49] The text is John Walvoord's, from his revision, Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Bible Themes: 52 Vital Doctrines of the Scriptures Simplified and Explained*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 200.

[50] Gerhard Friedrich ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Geoffrey W. Bromily, trans. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 6:219–20.

This event is what James alludes to when he writes, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?" (Jas 2:21). God has already called him righteous because of his faith, but then men call him, "a friend of God," because of his obedience. This is a second justification, as one author puts it, "In Romans man is justified by faith in 'God's sight.' In James man is justified by works in 'Man's sight.'"[51] Abraham did not eventually go to heaven because men called him righteous—that is God's decision—but Abraham is a hero for many people even today, not because he sat at home on his comfy chair and believed the right creeds, but because he rose to the occasion and lived by faith. As the author of Hebrews puts it: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, 'Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.' He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back" (Heb 11:17–19).

Having laid out the example of Abraham, James then makes his point,[52] "You see that faith worked with his [Abraham's] works and by works, faith was matured" (Jas 2:22).[53] This call to maturity

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[51] Isaac Massey Haldeman, *How to study the Bible, the Second Coming and other expositions* (New York: Charles C. Cook, 1904), 43.

[52] Some would have that the diatribe extends from ἀλλ᾽ ἐρεῖ τις in v. 20 and ends immediately before ὁρᾶτε of v. 24, such that in v. 24, "the writer of the Epistle again speaks in his own name, and, as it were, sums up the previous argument." This interpretation is difficult with the 𝔐 reading of δεῖξόν μοι τὴν πίστιν σου ἐκ τῶν ἔργων σου, κἀγώ δείξω σοι ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μου τὴν πίστιν μου in v. 18, and even further complicated by v. 19. It is much more natural for the objection to end with the *ad hominum* Θέλεις δὲ γνῶναι, ὦ ἄνθρωπε κενέ, ὅτι… in v. 20. For a presentation of the view that the response to the diatribe begins with ὁρᾶτε of v. 24, see William Oscar Emil Oesterley, "The General Epistle of James" in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. iv, William Robertson Nicoll, ed. (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1910), 446–7.

[53] Author's translation. Βλέπεις ὅτι ἡ πίστις συνήργει τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἡ πίστις ἐτελειώθη;

echoes the first thing that James writes after his greeting: "Consider it all joy, my brothers, whenever various trials come around, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have mature work, so that you may be mature and whole, lacking in nothing" (Jas 1:2–4).[54]

Having addressed the objector and given the example of Abraham, James summarizes that not only is there justification before God by faith, but also justification before man by works. "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone" (Jas 2:20). For good measure, he even throws in another example from Jewish history, "And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?" (Jas 2:25). Did Rahab's heroic deeds earn her eternal life? Of course not. She received eternal life freely through faith. She did, however, become a national heroine because of her works and is even listed alongside Abraham in the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11.

James has called the postsalvation faith alone "dead" and "useless," but he repeats himself once more to reiterate the point before moving on. "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead" (Jas 2:26). Faith after being justified before God is useless by itself. Since the audience has already been justified before God through faith, it is time for them to mature their faith with works.

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[54] Author's translation. Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἡγήσασθε, ἀδελφοί μου, ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις, γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν· ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἐχέτω, ἵνα ἦτε τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι, ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι. Notice that the adjective, mature (τέλειον and τέλειοι), comes up twice in this passage as compared to the verb (ἐτελειώθη) in James 2:22. Since the audience already has eternal life through faith, James is calling for them to mature this faith.

CONCLUSION

James 2:14–26 is a passage that theologians often use to introduce a works-assisted condition to the Gospel, but James does not support such theology. To be sure, this is a difficult text, and for this reason it is important to use simpler texts to understand it; however, the unfortunate tendency is the opposite, that theologians use James to redefine "faith" and usurp the plainest gospel passages elsewhere in the New Testament. A closer examination of James reveals that he uses the words, "save" and "justify," in a plain sense that does not necessarily carry the implications of salvation from hell. If evangelists want "faith" to include works, then they cannot turn to James, as he declares the direct opposite, that faith can indeed exist without works. In short, neither James, nor any other biblical author, ever indicates that works are a criterion for eternal life.

5
Salvation in Eastern and Western Catholicism Compared and Contrasted

David James

INTRODUCTION

The most important question in life was posed by a jailer in the Macedonian city of Philippi in the first century when he asked, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). The answer given by Paul and Silas was just as simple: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." Unfortunately, the simplicity of the salvation message began to be lost early on in church history as evidenced even in some of Paul's letters to the churches. With each passing century, layer upon layer of complexity was added by what would become the institutional "catholic" church.

While many in the West tend to think of Catholicism as the Roman Catholic Church, the situation is more complicated as the broad category of Catholicism is made up of twenty-four different churches in six different rites. Each rite represents diversity in theology and practice to a greater or lesser degree. These differences can present challenges to pastors and missionaries in regions where one or more of these churches is present if the soteriology of each one is not sufficiently understood.

Due to time constraints, the scope of this paper is limited to comparing salvation as understood in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM

The Roman Catholic Church (the Western/Latin rite), is centered in Rome with a centralized hierarchy based in Vatican City, led by the pope—the bishop of Rome. Roman Catholicism represents an estimated 1.33 billion members[1]—seventeen percent of the world's population and approximately fifty percent of all of Christendom.[2]

The Roman Catholic Church would say that Jesus…

> …founded the Church when…He said to Simon…"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16, 18).[3]
>
> The founding of the Church was completed on Pentecost Day, when the Holy Ghost descended upon the disciples who were assembled in Jerusalem…[4]

Biblically, we don't know when the church in Rome was founded or by whom, but by the time Paul wrote to them in the mid to late fifties, it was apparently well established and well-known given the number of people mentioned in Romans 16.

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[1] Accessed on 12/22/20, https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/number-of-catholics-worldwide-rises-to-133-billion-34786.
[2] Accessed on 12/22/20, https://www.pewforum.org/2013/02/13/the-global-catholic-population/.
[3] Rev. Fr. John Laux, *Church History: A History of the Catholic Church to 1940* (TAN Books), loc. 825, Kindle.
[4] Laux, *Church History*.

The church views the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 as the first of twenty-one ecumenical councils, with the most recent being Vatican II (1963–1965).

Christianity was illegal under the Roman Empire until AD 311 when the emperor Galerius issued an edict of tolerance.[5] Two years later, with Constantine's "Edict of Milan," Christianity became the favoured religion in the empire. This arguably marked the beginning of syncretism with paganism because of the advantages afforded to Christians. Paganism's influence was guaranteed by the Edict of Thessalonica issued by Theodosius I in AD 380 which made Christianity the only legal religion.[6] This syncretism undoubtedly contributed to Roman Catholicism's departure from a biblical view of salvation.

ORTHODOX CATHOLIC CHURCH

The history of the Orthodox Catholic Church (the Eastern/Greek rite), is rather complicated, but can be most simply understood as developing from the church originally centered in Antioch and later in Byzantium (Constantinople/Istanbul). Unlike Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy does not have a centralized hierarchy, but is rather represented by autonomous regions overseen by patriarchs.

> The Eastern Orthodox Church, which today has somewhere in the neighborhood of 250 million communicants, broke officially with the Roman Catholic Church in 1054, each charging the other with responsibility for the break. Eastern Orthodoxy includes the Churches

[5] Laux, 1952.
[6] Sidney Zdeneck Ehler and John B Morrall, eds. *Church and State Through the Centuries: A Collection of Historic Documents with Commentaries* (n.p., 1967), 6–7.

> of Albania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Romania, Russia, Serbia, and Sinai.[7]

Although the break from the church in the West is officially dated at AD 1054…

> …this neat, clear-cut…separation…is a vast oversimplification. Relations between the two great churches of Rome and Constantinople had been slowly deteriorating long before the 11th century over issues of Filioque and papal claims. Even after 1054, communications still flowed between the two great sees.[8]

Eastern Orthodoxy only recognizes the first seven ecumenical councils, and rejects the jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome, the pope.

COMPARING THE DOCTRINES OF JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

The task of trying to compare and contrast Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theology is not an easy one. This is because of differences in authority structures, combined with a difference in approach to developing theology and thinking about doctrine, in general.

The teaching authority of Roman Catholicism (the magisterium) is grounded in a centralized hierarchy of bishops under the bishop of Rome. In order to be considered official, all catechisms and theology books must be approved by the magisterium. The most recent

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[7] Huston Smith, *The World's Religions,* revised and updated, (plus) (n.p.: Harper Collins, Inc. n.d.) loc. 7411–3, Kindle.

[8] Michael Whelton, *Two Paths: Orthodoxy & Catholicism: Rome's Claims of Papal Supremacy in the Light of Orthodox Christian Teaching* (self-pub., Protecting Veil, 2020), 66, Kindle.

comprehensive *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states in its description: "Officially promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1997, it is the first 'universal' Catholic catechism since the Reformation and only the second in history."[9]

Eastern Orthodoxy has no comparable centralized hierarchy and thus no single binding source of dogma to which one can turn to discover the authoritative teachings of the church. Rather, multiple sources must be considered—all of which are subject to interpretation and commentary by theologians throughout the church.

> The main sources of Orthodox teaching are the Bible and Sacred Tradition. The third source is the writings of the so called Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists. The fourth source is decisions of the canonical synods, local and ecumenical, and their utterances of faith, especially the Symbol of Faith (Nicene Creed) and some of their canons pertaining to faith. The fifth source is the discourses written at the time of disputes and schisms, especially the Great Schism between the Eastern and Western parts of the Undivided Church (1054). The sixth source is a variety of discourses written after the Protestant Reformation; these documents critique the various errors of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.[10]

Furthermore, Eastern Orthodoxy tends not to formulate doctrine as propositional truths to the extent Christianity in the West does (whether in Roman Catholic or Protestant traditions).

> To the Orthodox, the Western Church's convulsions over the nature of justification, and particularly the relationship between faith and

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[9] Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000) (from description in Logos version).
[10] Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, accessed on 12/23/20, https://www.goarch.org/-/the-basic-sources-of-the-teachings-of-the-eastern-orthodox-church.

works, are largely incomprehensible because the presuppositions underlying the debates are often alien to the Eastern Christian mind.[11]

Being distinct from the approach in the West…

Two contrasts recur: (1) the juridicial approach of much of the West regarding sin and redemption, or restoration, versus the more existential and ontological approach of the East; and (2) the Western tendency to define, differentiate, and compartmentalize, as opposed to the Eastern tendency to theologize apophatically[12] and, when cataphatically,[13] primarily in a holistic and organic fashion.

Both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy hold that only their tradition represents the one true apostolic church.

The Goal of Salvation

Roman Catholicism[14]

In Roman Catholicism, the goal of salvation is to one day experience the *beatific vision*, that is, to enter into the presence of God.

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[11] William G. Rusch, ed., *Justification and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement: The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003), 101.

[12] Apophatic: involving the practice of describing something by stating which characteristics it does not have (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "apophatic," accessed December 25, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/ dictionary/apophatic).

[13] Cataphatic theology involves defining or knowing God through positive statements (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/ us/dictionary/english/cataphatic).

[14] Unless otherwise noted, all quotes for Roman Catholic doctrine are from *The Question and Answer Catechism*, which was chosen because of its concise presentation of doctrine. This catechism carries the official endorsement of an Imprimi Potest ("it may be printed") and Nihil Obstat ("nothing stands in the way"), and so is consistent with the more comprehensive official *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (published in 1997).

Those who are formally recognized as saints (*canonized*) are those who are recognized by the Church as already in the presence of God in heaven:

> **441**. Saints are persons who, in their life on earth, practiced extraordinary virtue that we are bidden to imitate. They now enjoy the beatific vision in heaven and are powerful intercessors for us before the throne of God.[15] [16]
>
> **484**. The beatific vision is a direct seeing of the Holy Trinity, with no creature standing between the soul and God. It is beatific because it will produce intense happiness, such as only God has a right to enjoy but that he shares with those who enter heaven because they had served him faithfully on earth.[17]

Eastern Orthodoxy

In Eastern Orthodoxy, the goal of salvation goes beyond merely being in the presence of God, and instead involves the process of deification (*theosis*)—of truly becoming god-like in some sense.

> …Orthodoxy teaches that the goal of salvation is **theosis**…also known in English as "divinization" or "deification."[18]
>
> Orthodoxy urges that this is what Scripture points to when it talks about salvation. What transpired on Mount Tabor shows what salvation, in its fullness, means for the faithful—deification, theosis,

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[15] John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism*, (n.p.: The Crown Publishing Group, n.d.), 103, Kindle.
[16] The numbers used in connection with the above catechism are provided for ease of reference.
[17] Hardon, *The Question and Answer*, 110.
[18] James R. Payton, Jr., T*he Victory of the Cross: Salvation in Eastern Orthodoxy* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic / InterVarsity Press, 2019), 115.

christification. According to Orthodoxy, salvation means to become conformed to the image of the Son of God…[19]

Deification…is not a transcending of what it means to be human, but the fulfillment of what it means to be human.[20]

…Salvation involves the "theosis" (the deification or divinization) of the entire human person in Christ;[21]

Through theosis we, of course, do not become God by essence — we become God by grace. Our communion is with the Divine energies — that is, the manifestations of God in this world – not the essence of God.[22]

Although theosis is a much-discussed topic in Orthodox writings, precisely what this means in practical terms is rather difficult to establish.

Summary

Roman Catholics strive to ultimately enter into the presence of God and enjoy being with Him forever. As will be seen, this requires that a Catholic must avoid dying with a mortal sin on one's soul and have fully repaid God for all of one's sins through penance and/or purgatory. On the other hand, the concept of theosis is not entirely absent from Roman Catholic theology as evidenced by the following:

460. The Word became flesh to make us "partakers of the divine nature"… "For the Son of God became man so that we might become

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[19] Payton, T*he Victory of the Cross*, 135.
[20] Andrew Louth, "The Place of Theosis," 39, in *The Victory of the Cross: Salvation in Eastern Orthodoxy,* 137.
[21] Christopher Veniamin, *The Orthodox Understanding of Salvation: "Theosis" in Scripture and Tradition* (Mount Thabor Publishing), 72, loc.1061, Kindle.
[22] "The Orthodox Teaching On Personal Salvation," accessed on 1/9/2021, https://orthochristian.com/46463.html.

> God." "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods."[23]

For Eastern Orthodox theologians, the concept of the deification of man occupies a place of tremendous significance—far more than in Roman Catholicism. This stems, at least in part, from the heavy reliance upon the writings of the early Church Fathers and the connection between theosis and salvation itself.

> Clement of Alexandria: …the Word of God became man, that thou mayest learn from man how man may become God…[24]
>
> Athanasias of Alexandria: Therefore He was not man, and then became God, but He was God, and then became man, and that to deify us.[25]

Sin: Original, Mortal, and Venial

Roman Catholicism

The Roman Catholic Church distinguishes two major categories of sin: *original sin* and *personal sin.*

> **178**. Original sin is first of all the sin of Adam who, as the ancestor of the human race, offended God and thereby lost the right to heaven

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[23] Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 116.
[24] Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks*, trans. Roberts-Donaldson (n.p.: Romans Road Media, 2015), 7.
[25] *A Select Library Of The Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers Of The Christian Church* (n.p.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), 329, accessed on 1/9/2021, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204.xxi.ii.i.xi.html.

for himself and his posterity. Original sin is also the loss of sanctifying grace that we inherit from Adam when we enter the world.[26]

188. Original sin does not totally corrupt our human nature. We are darkened in mind and weakened in will. But we are still capable of natural virtues and of freely cooperating with the grace of God.[27]

192. Original sin, as the absence of sanctifying grace, is ordinarily removed by the sacrament of baptism.[28]

Personal sins are further classified as either *mortal* or *venial* sins depending whether a given sin results in the loss of sanctifying grace.

922. Mortal sin is an actual sin that destroys sanctifying grace in the soul.[29]

924. The effects of mortal sin are the loss of divine friendship, past supernatural merits, and the right to enter heaven unless the sinner repents.[30]

925. The supernatural life of the soul, lost by mortal sin, can be restored by the sacrament of penance or by a perfect act of contrition.[31]

926. Venial sin is an offense against God that does not deprive the sinner of sanctifying grace.[32]

928. A person commits a venial sin when he transgresses a divine law that is not grave, or when he transgresses a grave precept but without awareness of its gravity or without full consent.[33]

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26 Hardon, 57.
27 Hardon.
28 Hardon, 59.
29 Hardon, 186.
30 Hardon.
31 Hardon.
32 Hardon, 187.
33 Hardon.

> **929**. Venial sin darkens the mind in its perception of virtue, weakens the will in its pursuit of holiness, lowers one's resistance to temptation, and causes a person to deviate from the path that leads to heavenly glory.[34]

Eastern Orthodoxy

In contrast to the Roman Catholic view, the Orthodox view of *ancestral sin* (preferred over *original sin*) is that Adam's descendants only inherit his propensity to sin—which has implications when it comes to dealing with the resulting sin problem.

> We do not inherit the guilt for the bad choice that Adam made, but we inherit the consequence of his sinfulness, the change in nature he experienced, his body becoming subject to death and corruption. Since we are all descendants of Adam and Eve we all inherit their changed nature that resulted from the fall.[35]
>
> In the Orthodox teaching we are subject to sinful tendencies, sickness, suffering and death as the result of our descendance from Adam… Our goal now is to overcome these fallen tendencies with the help of the Holy Spirit and the way of Christ so we can gain union with God, overcome self-centered tendencies that result from fear of death, and live in harmony with him in Paradise.

Concerning actual sins, Eastern Orthodoxy does not categorize them into mortal and venial.

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[34] Hardon, 187–8.
[35] Saint George Greek Orthodox Cathedral, *Living the Orthodox Christian Life: An Introduction to Orthodoxy* (Greenville, South Carolina: n.p., n.d.), 66–7.

> In the pre-Vatican II Roman Catholic catechism, sins were categorized as "mortal" and "venial."…These categories do not exist in the Orthodox Church. Sin is sin.[36]
>
> While the Roman Catholic tradition has identified particular acts as "mortal" sins, in the Orthodox tradition we see that only a sin for which we don't repent is "mortal."[37]

Summary

Both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy hold that Adam's sin had an effect on his posterity such that there is a propensity toward sin, that includes a weakening of the mind and will. However, Roman Catholicism teaches a further consequence of original sin that would not be accepted by Eastern Orthodoxy—the absence of sanctifying grace because the *guilt* of Adam is also passed on to his descendants. Rather, the Orthodox view is that "God has never deprived mankind of His mercy, help, grace…"[38]

Neither the *original sin* of Roman Catholicism nor the *ancestral sin* of Eastern Orthodoxy is equivalent to what most Evangelicals understand as the *sin nature* and so they should not be used interchangeably.

Another major difference would be the lack of a categorization of actual sins as mortal or venial in Eastern Orthodoxy as compared to Roman Catholicism. Rather, Eastern Orthodoxy holds something approximating what many Evangelicals believe is the only *unforgiveable sin* that can be presently committed, namely dying in a state of unbelief.

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[36] Accessed on 12/23/20, https://www.oca.org/questions/sacramentconfession/sin.
[37] *Philokalia—The Eastern Christian Spiritual Texts* (n.p.: SkyLight Illuminations, Turner Publishing Company, n.d.), loc. 381, Kindle.
[38] Fr. Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (Patina, CA: St. Herman Press, n.d.), loc. 2291, Kindle.

Selected Sacraments

Baptism (Roman Catholicism)

Baptism is the sacrament of spiritual rebirth based on Jesus' words to Nicodemus in John 3:5. "Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'" Therefore, baptism is an absolutely essential part of the justification process.

> **1140**. Baptism is the sacrament of spiritual rebirth. Through the symbolic action of washing with water and the use of appropriate ritual words, the baptized person is cleansed of all his sins and incorporated into Christ.[39]
>
> **1151**. The effects of baptism are the removal of the guilt of sin and all punishment due to sin, conferral of the grace of regeneration and the infused virtues, incorporation into Christ and his Church, receiving the baptismal character and the right to heaven.[40]
>
> **1153**. Baptism removes all the penalties, eternal and temporal, attached to original and actual sin.[41]
>
> **1179**. It is commonly taught by the Church that baptism of water is necessary for salvation for those who have not reached the use of reason.[42]

Roman Catholicism has no formal position regarding unbaptized individuals who die before reaching the age of reason. Historically, the Church has postulated a neutral place called *limbo* as their destination and has been moving toward believing that they enter heaven.

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[39] Hardon, 230.
[40] Hardon, 232.
[41] Hardon.
[42] Hardon, 237–8.

Those wishing to convert to Roman Catholicism need to begin regularly attending services and go through a period of instruction in the faith and practice of the Church. After this eight- to ten-month process, the catechumen is baptized and welcomed into the Church.

Baptism (Eastern Orthodoxy)

While the Eastern Orthodox view of baptism is similar to that of Roman Catholicism, because original/ancestral sin is viewed differently, the purpose and effects of baptism are also understood differently.

> [Baptism] is the beginning of the Orthodox Way of Life. This is the gateway to grace and participation in the Mysteries of the church. It is a new birth and is performed for our salvation.[43]

However, depending on the Orthodox theologian, the understanding of the significance and effects of baptism are described in a way that is close to that of Roman Catholicism.

> Since in Baptism a man receives, in place of the old existence he had, a new existence and life, and becomes a child of God, a member of the Body of Christ or the Church, an inheritor of eternal life, it is therefore evident that Baptism is indispensable for all, including infants, so that growing in body and spirit they might grow in Christ.[44]

A potential source of confusion for those who may be ministering in a predominately Eastern Orthodox culture can be seen in the following statements:

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[43] *Living the Orthodox Christian Life*, 93.
[44] Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, loc. 3772, Kindle.

> Actually, the East finds slightly repugnant the notion that God would consider someone guilty of something which he or she did not do personally. Yet the Eastern Church, like the Western Church, baptizes infants. The East's insistence on infant baptism and simultaneous denial of original guilt is possible because Orthodoxy rejects Augustine's leap of logic regarding the purpose of infant baptism — the remission of sins.[45]
>
> Baptism is not only a symbol of cleansing and washing away the defilement of the soul, but in itself is the beginning and source of the Divine gifts which cleanse and annihilate all the sinful defilements and communicate a new life. All sins are forgiven, both original sin and personal sins; the way is opened for a new life;[46]

So, while both Catholicism and Orthodoxy agree that baptism is the sacrament of new birth, exactly what that entails seems to be a matter for which there is less than complete consensus in the East.

Penance (Roman Catholicism)

After baptism is received, Roman Catholics are to fully participate in a sacramental life. The next phase in faithfully pursuing that life is penance, in preparation for Communion—both of which are important in the lifelong process of salvation.

> **1321**. Penance is the sacrament instituted by Christ in which sinners are reconciled with God through the absolution of the priest.[47]
>
> **1322**. Christ instituted this sacrament to give us a ready and assured means of obtaining remission for the sins committed after baptism.[48]

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45 Rusch, *Justification and the Future,* 105.
46 Pomazansky, loc. 3797, Kindle.
47 Hardon, 263–4.
48 Hardon, 264.

The sacrament of penance includes confession to a priest and then performing the tasks he assigns in order to repay God for the sins committed against Him. Penance is required of all prior to receiving their first Communion (generally around seven years of age), and for anyone who believes they have fallen into mortal sin before they may receive holy Communion.

Penance (Eastern Orthodoxy)

As does Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy sees salvation (as theosis) as a lifelong pursuit involving participation in the sacraments (generally called *mysteries* in Orthodoxy). In keeping with Orthodoxy's overall rejection of a forensic view of justification, sin is seen in what are arguably less-strict terms than in the Western Church, and penance (*epitemia*) is likewise explained in a somewhat less-harsh way.

> By epitimia is to be understood an interdiction or punishment… which, according to Church canons, the priest as a spiritual physician decrees for certain repenting Christians in order to treat their moral diseases.[49]
>
> Penances are given not to everyone, but only to certain repenting Christians: to those who, either from the seriousness or the quality of their sins, or because of the character of their repentance, have need of these spiritual treatments.[50]
>
> Penances have the character of punishments, but not in the strict sense and not for the sake of "satisfaction for sins," as the Roman theologians teach. They are acts which are corrective, healing, pedagogical.[51]

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[49] Pomazansky, loc. 4098, Kindle.
[50] Pomazansky, loc. 4124, Kindle.
[51] Pomazansky.

Eucharist (Roman Catholicism)

Holy Communion is perhaps the single most important sacrament in practical terms because it would be the one in which Roman Catholics would participate most frequently.

> **1217**. The Eucharist is necessary for salvation… Christ's words, "if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you" (John 6:53), mean that Holy Communion is necessary to sustain the life of grace in a person who has reached the age of reason.[52]

The Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation means that the bread and wine undergo a change of substance through the use of appropriate ritual words by the presiding priest and literally become Jesus' body and blood.

> **1214**. The Eucharist is a sacrament which really, truly, and substantially contains the body and blood, soul, and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine.[53]

Nominal Catholics may only occasionally go to Mass—for example, at Easter (a grave obligation) and perhaps at Christmas, while many would go most weeks, with some going daily, especially in "very Catholic" countries. The earliest age for First Communion has changed at different points in history but is presently around seven years old.

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[52] Pomazansky, 245.
[53] Hardon, 244–5.

Eucharist (Eastern Orthodoxy)

The doctrine of the Eucharist in Eastern Orthodoxy is essentially the same as in Roman Catholicism with regard to both transubstantiation and the spiritual effects of the sacrament.

> The Eucharist (literally "thanksgiving") is the Mystery in which the bread and wine of offering are changed by the Holy Spirit into the true Body and true Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then the believers receive communion of them for a most intimate union with Christ and eternal life.[54]

Furthermore, just as in Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy holds that the Eucharist is a continuation of the sacrifice of the cross, and as such, it also provides for the satisfaction of sin.

> The Eucharistic sacrifice is not a repetition of the Saviour's sacrifice on the Cross, but it is an offering of the sacrificed Body and Blood once offered by our Redeemer on the Cross,[55]
>
> The Eucharist is likewise a propitiatory sacrifice for all members of the Church.[56]

Unlike Roman Catholicism, First Communion is not delayed until children are able to somewhat understand the sacrament, and is often given at the time of baptism and confirmation (chrismation).

> …the most distinct feature about Greek Orthodox First Communion is that it can be received any time after baptism, not at

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[54] Pomazansky, loc. 3872, Kindle.
[55] Pomazansky, loc. 3998, Kindle.
[56] Pomazansky.

the stringently-held threshold of ages 7–8 in the Roman Catholic Church.[57]

Confirmation (Roman Catholicism)

The sacrament of confirmation is available to all baptized persons who have reached the age of reason.

> **1189**. Confirmation is the sacrament…in which, through chrism and the imposition of hands together with the use of certain sacred words, a baptized person receives the Holy Spirit, is strengthened in grace, and signed as a soldier of Christ.[58]
>
> **1200**. Confirmation increases the possession of divine life, confers actual graces, a special sacramental grace, and gives a unique sacramental character…Confirmation gives us grace to fulfill Christ's command: "You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).[59]

The command to be perfect, as Catholics understand it, is the only sure way to avoid spending an indefinite length of time in purgatory—a place where the sufferings are worse than any here on the earth.[60]

Confirmation is done during a normal mass, with a renewal of one's baptismal promises, and interestingly, since Vatican II, involves the use of a formula adopted from "the ancient Eastern liturgy."[61]

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[57] Accessed on 1/11/21, https://classroom.synonym.com/greek-orthodox-and-first-holy-communion-12087327.html.
[58] Hardon, 240.
[59] Hardon, 242.
[60] Hardon, 82.
[61] Hardon, 240.

Confirmation (Eastern Orthodoxy)

The sacrament (mystery) of confirmation is called "Chrismation" in the Orthodox Church—reflecting the use of chrism (anointing oil), as it is in the Roman Catholic Church as well. In contrast to Roman Catholicism, baptism, confirmation, and communion, usually happen together as full initiation rites into the Church.

> The Mystery of Chrismation is performed usually immediately after the Mystery of Baptism, comprising together with it a single Church rite.[62]
>
> In the West, the separation of Chrismation from Baptism occurred in about the 13th century.[63]

The effects of Chrismation are similar to confirmation in the West as it is believed the mystery confers actual grace and so is critical to the process of salvation/deification.

> It is (a) the culminating act of being united to the Church, the confirmation or seal of union; and (b) the seal of the Grace-given powers which are bestowed in it for strengthening and growth in spiritual life.[64]

Anointing of the Sick (Roman Catholicism)

The sacrament of anointing of the sick has been previously known as extreme unction, final anointing, and last rites, but was changed "because this sacrament is intended for all who are gravely ill or advanced in age and not only for persons at the point of death."[65]

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62 Pomazansky, loc. 3797, Kindle.
63 Pomazansky, loc. 3872, Kindle.
64 Pomazansky.
65 Hardon, 301.

Anointing of the sick provides several spiritual benefits, and is supremely important for Roman Catholics to successfully complete the process of attaining ultimate justification.

> **1505**. The sacrament of anointing is a sacrament of the New Law instituted by Christ to give the sick spiritual assistance, strengthen their supernatural life, and, if need be, forgive their sins.[66]
>
> **1518**. The spiritual effects of anointing are: forgiveness of the guilt of unremitted sin, even grave sin for which the person had at least imperfect sorrow; remission of the temporal punishment still due for remitted sin, to such a degree that the expiation can be complete; supernatural patience to bear with the sufferings of one's illness; extraordinary confidence in God's mercy, which a person certainly needs when he faces eternity; and special infusion of moral courage to resist temptations of the devil.[67]

This is especially important because there is no way for Roman Catholics to know with any certainty whether or not they have a mortal sin on their soul, which would result in them losing all sanctifying grace, forfeiting whatever merits they may have gained in life, and being consigned to hell for eternity.

Anointing of the Sick (Eastern Orthodoxy)

The Eastern Orthodox equivalent of the Roman Catholicism sacrament is the *Mystery of Unction.*

> The Mystery of Unction is a sacred action in which, while the body is anointed with oil, the Grace of God which heals infirmities of soul and body is called down upon a sick person.[68]

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[66] Hardon, 297.
[67] Hardon, 300.
[68] Pomazansky, loc. 4300, Kindle.

In contrast to the Roman Catholic practice of being performed by a single person, multiple priests are usually involved in the Orthodox version.

> It is performed by a gathering of presbyters, ideally seven in number; however, it can be performed by a lesser number and even by a single priest.[69]

The actions are also somewhat more complex than in Roman Catholicism.

> The visible side of the Mystery comprises seven anointings of the sick person with oil by the participating priests in order; this is done in the form of a cross on the forehead, the nostrils, the cheeks, the lips, the chest, and both sides of the hands, accompanied by prayers and by the reading of specific passages in the Epistles and the Gospels.[70]

A major difference in the ultimate purpose of unction would be due to the lack of the category of mortal sin in Eastern Orthodoxy. Therefore, unction would not have the function of undoing the effects of such sins.

The Afterlife

Roman Catholicism

According to Roman Catholicism, there are three possible destinations immediately upon one's death. Immediate entrance into heaven may be granted to the few who have lived an exemplary life

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[69] Pomazansky.
[70] Pomazansky, loc. 4328, Kindle.

and have regularly availed themselves of the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, and who have had anointing of the sick administered (which would also include confession and the Eucharist).

> God made us to know him, love him, and serve him, and thereby reach heaven.[71]
>
> God has revealed mysteries to offer us the means of reaching our supernatural destiny, which is heaven.[72]

Those who may still have the stain of venial sin and/or owe reparations to God for such sins but who have no mortal sin on their soul will find themselves in purgatory until they have been purified (or until the second coming of Christ, when purgatory will be emptied).

> **317**. Stain of sin means the temporal punishment still due to venial or forgiven mortal sins. If the punishment has not been satisfied before death, a person must suffer in purgatory to repay this debt which is owed to the divine Majesty.[73]

Those who die in a state of mortal sin will be consigned to hell forever.

> **309**. What is hell? Hell is a place of endless punishment to which the wicked are condemned forever with the evil spirits.[74]
>
> **312**. Who is in hell? Besides the evil spirits, those are in hell who die in the state of mortal sin. They are the unrepentant sinners.[75]

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71 Hardon, 25.
72 Hardon, 36.
73 Hardon, 82.
74 Hardon, 81.
75 Hardon.

Eastern Orthodoxy

As with many things related to ultimate salvation, the Eastern Orthodox view of the afterlife is substantially different—and once again, this seems to be connected to the rejection of a forensic view of justification as held by Roman Catholicism. First, there is no concept of purgatory as a third possible destination after death, and this is because purification and punishment are not seen as a part of the process of deification.

Another important difference is that heaven and hell are not viewed as distinct places but are rather experiences related to one's view of God.

> Heaven and hell are not understood as physical places in which we are sentenced for all eternity, but an actual state of being when we encounter the Almighty God of Consuming Fire. God's loving and fiery presence either causes us to withdraw within ourselves or to reach out and be consumed and healed.[76]
>
> The states of being called "heaven" and "hell" begin here in this life, and are fully consummated in the age to come.[77]
>
> For those who love the Lord, His Presence will be infinite joy, paradise and eternal life. For those who hate the Lord, the same Presence will be infinite torture, hell and eternal death.[78]

Furthermore, Eastern Orthodoxy distinguishes the level of experience of heaven and hell between the Particular Judgment (at one's death) and the Last Judgment (at the end of time).

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[76] Accessed on 1/11/21, https://www.orthodoxroad.com/heaven-hell/.
[77] Accessed on 1/11/21, https://www.orthodoxroad.com/heaven-hell/.
[78] Accessed on 1/11/21, https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/spirituality/the-kingdom-of-heaven/heaven-and-hell.

> We believe that the souls of the dead are in a state of blessedness or torment according to their deeds. After being separated from the body, they immediately pass over either into joy or into sorrow and grief; however, they do not feel either complete blessedness or complete torment. For complete blessedness or complete torment each one receives after the General Resurrection, when the soul is reunited with the body in which it lived in virtue or in vice.[79]

In addition, the prayers of the Orthodox faithful can influence the degree of punishment felt by those experiencing hell prior to the Last Judgment.

> …the torments of sinners before the Last Judgment have a preparatory character. These torments can be eased and even taken away by the prayers of the Church.[80]

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, salvation in both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy is dependent upon a combination of faith and works. The necessary works in both traditions involve faithfully living out a moral life and participation in the sacraments. However, the similarities between salvation in the two churches generally ends there.

Roman Catholicism focuses more on dealing with sin and righteousness (as measured against the official teachings of the church) on a relatively objective, more judicial basis than Eastern Orthodoxy. Conversely, Eastern Orthodoxy has an arguably more subjective

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[79] Pomazansky, loc. 4714, Kindle.
[80] Pomazansky.

approach that focuses to a greater degree on the inner spiritual journey toward deification.

One way to differentiate the ultimate goal of the two schools of thought is that Roman Catholicism emphasizes *being with* God, while Eastern Orthodoxy emphasizes *becoming like* God.

6
Justification: Are Evangelicals and Catholics Really Together?

David James

INTRODUCTION

Over the last fifty to seventy years, a growing movement has sought to bring Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics together for fellowship and cooperation after centuries of schism. Both groups would generally agree that biblical fellowship and cooperation can only happen between brothers and sisters in Christ, which in turn requires a mutual understanding of the gospel and the doctrine of justification—at least at some basic level.

The three most significant issues that resulted in the split of the Reformation can be summarized as:

> The Bible as the final authority for faith and practice (as opposed to tradition and the church)
>
> The priesthood of the believer (*as opposed to a clerical priesthood*)
>
> Justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone

Focusing on justification, the question is whether enough theological movement back toward one another has happened between the two groups since the Reformation to conclude that for all

practical purposes the Reformation is now over. If Evangelicals and Catholics do now fundamentally agree on justification, the answer is arguably, "Yes, it's over."

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relevant issues to determine if such convergence has taken place such that Evangelicals and Catholics are now truly together as one in the body of Christ because of agreement on matters of soteriology.

"EVANGELICALS AND CATHOLICS TOGETHER"

In March 1994, a group of evangelical and Roman Catholic scholars signed a document titled "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (ECT). Some have suggested that this is "the most significant development in Protestant-Catholic relations since the dawn of the Reformation."[1] At the heart of the document was the shared view that Protestants and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ and so should work to heal the ongoing schism between these two traditions.

Chuck Colson on the evangelical side and Richard Neuhaus on the Roman Catholic side were initially responsible for the development of the ECT document.

> Both Neuhaus and Colson had undergone significant spiritual change as adults. Neuhaus…was a Lutheran pastor who in the 1980s became a Roman Catholic priest. …after an experience of Christian conversion and after serving a prison term for his role in Watergate, Colson became a leading "public evangelical…"[2]

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[1] Accessed on 12/12/20, https://www.gty.org/library/articles/A149/evangelicals-and-catholics-together.

[2] Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, *Is the Reformation Over?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 152, Kindle.

While ECT was by no means universally accepted by either evangelical or catholic theologians, there were enough high-profile supporters on both sides that its influence has been significant. Other evangelical contributors and/or signatories included Richard Land, Jesse Miranda, Bill Bright, Os Guinness, Mark Noll, Pat Roberson, and J.I. Packer.

The ECT document begins with:

> We are Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics who have been led through prayer, study, and discussion to common convictions about Christian faith and mission…In this statement we address what we have discovered both about our unity and about our differences…We therefore commend this statement to their prayerful consideration.[3]

Later in the introduction we read:

> As Christ is one, so the Christian mission is one. That one mission can be and should be advanced in diverse ways. Legitimate diversity, however, should not be confused with existing divisions between Christians that obscure the one Christ and hinder the one mission.[4]

By setting aside areas of disagreement, the framers of ECT hoped to advance the cause of Christ by focusing almost exclusively on areas of theological agreement in order to affect unity among Christians and changes in society, especially in areas of ethics and morality. The underlying assumption that there was essential agreement concerning justification was foundational, such that the two sides could view themselves as already one in Christ: "All who accept Christ as Lord and Saviour are brothers and sisters in Christ. Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ."[5] Not only

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[3] Accessed on 12/12/20, http://www.leaderu.com/ftissues/ft9405/articles/mission.html.
[4] Accessed on 12/12/20, http://www.leaderu.com/ftissues/ft9405/articles/mission.html.
[5] Accessed on 12/12/20, http://www.leaderu.com/ftissues/ft9405/articles/mission.html.

does this overlook the significant soteriological differences that still remain between Evangelicals and Catholics, it also tends to presume that *all* who identify as either Evangelical or Catholic are necessarily Christians in the biblical sense – something that *cannot* be taken for granted.

Further clouding the issue is a 1997 follow-up document (ECT II) titled, "The Gift of Salvation." Based on some statements in ECT II, one might conclude that the most important issue of the Reformation had been finally resolved after nearly 500 years.

> We agree that justification is not earned by any good works or merits of our own; it is entirely God's gift, conferred through the Father's sheer graciousness, out of the love that he bears us in his Son, who suffered on our behalf and rose from the dead for our justification.[6]

In his 2005 book, *Is the Reformation Over?*, evangelical historian Mark Knoll (a professor at Wheaton College and an endorser of ECT) observed:

> Whatever differences may still exist between such Catholics and evangelicals with respect to the foundations of Christianity are infinitesimal when compared to differences between traditional Christianity as described above and modernist Christianity of all sorts.[7]

Noll goes on to say:

> Thus, on the substance of what is actually taught about God's saving work in the world, if not always on the exact terminology used to describe that saving work, many evangelicals and Catholics believe something close to the same thing. If it is true, as once was repeated

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[6] Accessed on 12/13/20, https://www.firstthings.com/article/1998/01/001-the-gift-of-salvation.

[7] Noll and Nystrom, *Is the Reformation Over?*, 230.

> frequently by Protestants conscious of their anchorage in Martin Luther or John Calvin that…justification is the article on which the church stands or falls, then the Reformation is over.[8]

These are significant statements by someone who was named by *Time* magazine in 2005 as one of the twenty-five most influential Evangelicals in America.[9] Interestingly, the year after Noll published *Is the Reformation Over?*, he moved to Notre Dame University,[10] even though he identifies as "Reformed" in his theology. (In 2016, Noll became Research Professor of History at Regent University.)[11]

EVANGELICAL DEVELOPMENTS LEADING TOWARD ECT

ECT was arguably an inevitable step in a long period of increasing ecumenical cooperation between some Evangelicals and Catholics going back to at least the 1950s and 1960s. This was likely facilitated by changes in Billy Graham's philosophy of ministry such that Catholics began to be included in his crusades. Graham's influence during this time cannot be overstated.

One former evangelical convert to Catholicism described Graham's change on the America: The Jesuit Review website:

> [Graham] risked a great deal with his core evangelical constituency when he began building bridges with Catholics. This started after his 1957 crusade in New York City at Madison Square Garden, the first

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[8] Noll and Nystrom, 232.
[9] Accessed 12/13/20, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/completelist/0,29569,1993235,00.html.
[10] Accessed 12/13/20, https://news.nd.edu/news/an-evolving-relationshipbrevangelical-scholar-mark-noll-discusses-move-to-notre-dame/.
[11] Accessed on 12/13/20, https://www.regent-college.edu/about-us/news/2016/regent-appoints-dr-mark-noll-as-research-professor.

> time Billy Graham preached on national television, when local Catholic priests warned parishioners against attending. Mr. Graham responded by subsequently reaching out to prominent Catholics in every city as he prepared his next crusade, to stand with him as representatives of the Christian faith.[12]

The formation of the Moral Majority in the 1970s served to further break down long-standing barriers between Evangelicals and Catholics that included a fairly antagonistic and suspicious stance toward one another. The Moral Majority tended to overlook differences in order to facilitate cooperation between theologically diverse groups in order to achieve mutually desired cultural changes and political goals that might contribute to those changes.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF VATICAN II

Vatican II (1962–1965) was the most recent ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church. The overall purpose of this council was to equip the church to meet the challenges and needs of the modern era. One specific purpose of the third session of the council can be seen throughout the "Decree on Ecumenism" in the *Documents of Vatican II,* parts of which are included here:

Introduction

> Promoting the restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the chief concerns of the Second Sacred Ecumenical Synod of the Vatican…Everywhere, large numbers have felt the impulse of this grace,

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[12] Accessed on 12/12/20, https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2018/02/21/how-billy-graham-shaped-american-catholicism.

and among our separated brethren also there increases from day to day a movement, fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, for the restoration of unity among all Christians. [13]

The Practice of Ecumenism

Concerning intent and methodology:

We must come to understand the outlook of our separated brethren…Catholics need to acquire a more adequate understanding of the distinctive doctrines of our separated brethren…Of great value for this purpose are meetings between the two sides, especially for discussion of theological problems, where each can deal with the other on an equal footing.[14]

The Separated Churches and Ecclesial Communities in the West

Our thoughts are concerned first of all with those Christians who openly confess Jesus Christ as God and Lord and as the sole Mediator between God and man…We are indeed aware, that among them views are held considerably different from the doctrine of the Catholic Church…But we rejoice to see our separated brethren looking to Christ as the source and center of ecclesiastical communion…they feel compelled to search for unity ever more ardently, and to bear witness to their faith among all the peoples of the earth.[15]

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[13] Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II with Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities* (n.p.: America Press, Inc., [1966?]), loc. 8399, Kindle.
[14] Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, loc. 8539, Kindle.
[15] Abbott, loc. 8747, Kindle.

THE TEACHING AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH AND EPISCOPAL INFALLIBILITY

The Catholic doctrine of Episcopal Infallibility is central in trying to determine whether Evangelicals and Catholics are together on the matter of justification. This doctrine is foundational to the broader doctrine of the teaching authority of the magisterium of the church–– the concept that only the bishops of the church, together with the bishop of Rome (the pope) are divinely authorized and supernaturally empowered to properly and authoritatively interpret and teach the word of God as found in sacred Scripture and sacred tradition.

Note: All doctrinal quotes below are from *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism,* which was chosen because of its concise presentation of Roman Catholic doctrine. This catechism carries the official endorsement of an *Imprimi Potest* ("it may be printed") and *Nihil Obstat* ("nothing stands in the way"), and so is consistent with the more comprehensive *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (published in 1997). The numbers of the catechism have been retained for reference purposes.

Episcopal Infallibility

> **387**. A bishop is a successor of the apostles, who has received the fullness of Christ's priesthood.[16]
>
> **390**. The authority of the pope is universal, whereas the authority of bishops is local.[17]
>
> **419**. The Church's magisterium is her universal teaching authority, her possession of light from God and therefore the divine right to teach all the faithful the truths of salvation.[18]

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[16] John Hardon, *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism*, (n.p.,: The Crown Publishing Group, n.d.), 94, Kindle.
[17] Hardon, *The Question and Answer*.
[18] Hardon, 99.

423. …the Church's magisterium, which is vested exclusively in the successors of Peter and the other apostles, is infallible.[19]

424. The pope and the community of bishops under the pope possess the gift of infallibility in teaching.[20]

425. Infallibility is immunity from error, excluding not only its existence but even its possibility.[21]

426. The pope is infallible when he acts as the father and ruler of all the faithful. He enjoys the unique grace which protects him from error when he actually and specifically exercises the office of teacher of the universal Church and supreme judge in matters of faith and morals.[22]

427. Infallibility differs from impeccability in that infallibility is the impossibility either of deceiving or being deceived in teaching others; impeccability is the impossibility of offending God by committing sin. The pope is infallible but not impeccable.[23]

Protestants (and perhaps some Catholics) tend to misunderstand infallibility and impeccability. These doctrines do not mean that the pope does not sin or make mistakes in his life or ministry or even in things he says or teaches in an official capacity. Rather, infallibility means that when he speaks officially as the successor of St. Peter on matters of doctrine or practice (*ex-cathedra* – from the chair of St. Peter), he does so without error and so such statements are binding and must be believed by all Catholics.

The scope of infallibility for the pope is personal, while the other bishops of the Church enjoy corporate infallibility when acting together – such as in an ecumenical council.

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19 Hardon, 99–100.
20 Hardon, 100.
21 Hardon.
22 Hardon.
23 Hardon.

431. Bishops individually or a group of bishops do not enjoy the privilege of personal infallibility.[24]

432. Bishops are infallible when, united with the pope, as authorized teachers on faith and morals they agree on one position to be held as definitive.[25]

We will return to the significance of episcopal infallibility and why it is important to the question of whether Evangelicals are together with Catholics on the matter of justification.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION IN ROMAN CATHOLICISM

In spite of the ECT II statement that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, it must be asked whether such a statement is consistent with official Roman Catholic theology. In practice, it matters not what individual Catholic theologians may believe or say about the matter. They do not possess the gift of personal infallibility to protect them from error, nor do they have the authority to impose their views on the church or even to teach them to the Catholic faithful for that matter.

Furthermore, if their views come into conflict with the official teachings of the Church as developed by the bishops through ecumenical councils, then they are obligated to defer to those teachings as found in the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and other sanctioned catechisms. So, what does the Catholic Church teach concerning the required steps and conditions for salvation?

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[24] Hardon, 101.
[25] Hardon.

Original Sin

178. Original sin is first of all the sin of Adam who, as the ancestor of the human race, offended God and thereby lost the right to heaven for himself and his posterity. Original sin is also the loss of sanctifying grace that we inherit from Adam when we enter the world.[26]

184. As a result of original sin, we are conceived without the possession of sanctifying grace.[27]

188. Original sin does not totally corrupt our human nature. We are darkened in mind and weakened in will. But we are still capable of natural virtues and of freely cooperating with the grace of God.[28]

192. Original sin, as the absence of sanctifying grace, is ordinarily removed by the sacrament of baptism.[29]

Mortal Sin

922. Mortal sin is an actual sin that destroys sanctifying grace in the soul.[30]

924. The effects of mortal sin are the loss of divine friendship, past supernatural merits, and the right to enter heaven unless the sinner repents.[31]

925. The supernatural life of the soul, lost by mortal sin, can be restored by the sacrament of penance or by a perfect act of contrition.[32]

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[26] Hardon, 57.
[27] Hardon, 58.
[28] Hardon.
[29] Hardon, 59.
[30] Hardon, 186.
[31] Hardon.
[32] Hardon.

Venial Sin

> **926**. Venial sin is an offense against God that does not deprive the sinner of sanctifying grace.[33]
>
> **928**. A person commits a venial sin when he transgresses a divine law that is not grave, or when he transgresses a grave precept but without awareness of its gravity or without full consent.[34]
>
> **929**. Venial sin darkens the mind in its perception of virtue, weakens the will in its pursuit of holiness, lowers one's resistance to temptation, and causes a person to deviate from the path that leads to heavenly glory.[35]

For something to be classified as a mortal sin, certain conditions must be met such that there is willful intent to do something that is known to be seriously sinful, otherwise it would be a venial sin. Since, it also depends on the specific circumstances, a mortal sin for one person might not be a mortal sin for another. Furthermore, since sins are only categorized in terms of their effects on the soul in relation to the retention or loss of sanctifying grace, there is no way to determine with certainty in this life whether a given sin is venial or mortal – although the consequences are eternal.

The Death of Christ

> **272**. Jesus Christ…made satisfaction for original sin and all the other sins of the human race, from Adam to the end of the world.[36]

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[33] Hardon, 187.
[34] Hardon.
[35] Hardon, 187–8.
[36] Hardon, 73.

> **273**. Only Christ could make full reparation for our sins because the heavenly Father demanded complete satisfaction for the sins of mankind.[37]
>
> **275**. Christ redeemed us from the guilt of sin, and thus reconciled us with his heavenly Father; from the punishment we deserved for sin, in this life and in the life to come…[38]
>
> **276**. By his Passion and Death, Christ obtained for us the right to heavenly glory, the graces we need to remain in God's friendship and grow in sanctity, and the power to actually become more pleasing to God by resisting temptation and struggling with our fallen human nature.[39]

Although the above seems to suggest a legitimate basis for the statement in the ECT II document concerning salvation being granted on the basis of faith alone, this is not the case in reality.

The Sacrament of Baptism

The biblical understanding of grace would be such that it describes the way God acts toward humans by showing them undeserved/unearned favour. In this way, it is similar to the concepts of love and mercy. Grace, love, and mercy are not given or transferred – they are *demonstrated*. However, in Catholic theology, sacraments actually confer the grace they represent and are not merely symbolic in nature. They are a visible means by which sanctifying grace is transferred from God to the human almost as a sort of conduit.

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[37] Hardon.
[38] Hardon, 74.
[39] Hardon.

1140. Baptism is the sacrament of spiritual rebirth. Through the symbolic action of washing with water and the use of appropriate ritual words, the baptized person is cleansed of all his sins and incorporated into Christ.[40]

1151. The effects of baptism are the removal of the guilt of sin and all punishment due to sin, conferral of the grace of regeneration and the infused virtues, incorporation into Christ and his Church, receiving the baptismal character and the right to heaven.[41]

1153. Baptism removes all the penalties, eternal and temporal, attached to original and actual sin.[42]

1179. It is commonly taught by the Church that baptism of water is necessary for salvation for those who have not reached the use of reason.[43]

The Sacrament of Confirmation

1189. Confirmation is the sacrament…in which, through chrism and the imposition of hands together with the use of certain sacred words, a baptized person receives the Holy Spirit, is strengthened in grace, and signed as a soldier of Christ.[44]

1200. Confirmation increases the possession of divine life, confers actual graces, a special sacramental grace, and gives a unique sacramental character…Confirmation gives us grace to fulfill Christ's command: "You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).[45]

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40 Hardon, 230.
41 Hardon, 232.
42 Hardon.
43 Hardon, 237–8.
44 Hardon, 240.
45 Hardon, 242.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist

1214. The Eucharist is a sacrament which really, truly, and substantially contains the body and blood, soul, and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. It is the great sacrament of God's love in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge is given to us of future glory.[46]

1217. The Eucharist is necessary for salvation, to be received either sacramentally or in desire. Christ's words, "if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you" (John 6:53), mean that Holy Communion is necessary to sustain the life of grace in a person who has reached the age of reason.[47]

The Sacrament of Penance

1318. Penance means repentance or satisfaction for sin.[48]

Equating repentance with satisfaction as if they are synonymous terms is deceptive and completely unbiblical as they are two entirely different concepts, although this is consistent with Catholic soteriology.

1321. Penance is the sacrament instituted by Christ in which sinners are reconciled with God through the absolution of the priest.[49]

1322. Christ instituted this sacrament to give us a ready and assured means of obtaining remission for the sins committed after baptism.[50]

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[46] Hardon, 244–5.
[47] Hardon, 245.
[48] Hardon, 263.
[49] Hardon, 263–4.
[50] Hardon, 264.

> **1320**. The virtue of penance is necessary for a sinner to be reconciled with God. If we expect his forgiveness, we must repent. Penance is also necessary because we must expiate and make reparation for the punishment which is due for our sins.[51]
>
> **1325**. …the sacrament of penance is necessary for all who have fallen into mortal sin after baptism. If the sacrament cannot actually be received, the desire for its reception suffices.[52]

A fundamental difference between Evangelical and Catholic soteriology can be found in the answer to the question, "Who pays for my sins?" Evangelicals understand that Christ fully paid the price for all sins, and in turn, that salvation is offered as a gift that is received by faith alone. One the other hand, Catholics would hold that ultimately they must pay for their own sins since Christ's work on the cross only made salvation possible, and that it is only achieved by those who successfully complete the salvation process – up to and including paying for one's sins through the cleansing fires of purgatory.

Living the Christian Life

> **492**. Is faith in what God revealed sufficient for salvation? No, we must also keep his Commandments. As Christ himself told us, "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments"[53]
>
> **505**. A morally good action is one that leads us to heaven, and a morally bad action is one that leads us away from our eternal destiny.[54]
>
> **541**. …it is necessary to keep the Commandments. For to break any of them willfully is to offend God and commit sin.[55]

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51 Hardon, 263.
52 Hardon, 264.
53 Hardon, 115.
54 Hardon, 115–6.
55 Hardon, 122.

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

1505. The sacrament of anointing is a sacrament of the New Law instituted by Christ to give the sick spiritual assistance, strengthen their supernatural life, and, if need be, forgive their sins.[56]

1518. The spiritual effects of anointing are: forgiveness of the guilt of unremitted sin, even grave sin for which the person had at least imperfect sorrow; remission of the temporal punishment still due for remitted sin, to such a degree that the expiation can be complete; supernatural patience to bear with the sufferings of one's illness; extraordinary confidence in God's mercy, which a person certainly needs when he faces eternity; and special infusion of moral courage to resist temptations of the devil.[57]

Purgatory

316. Purgatory is a state or condition in which the souls of the just, who die with the stains of sin, are cleansed before they are admitted to heaven.[58]

317. Stain of sin means the temporal punishment still due to venial or forgiven mortal sins. If the punishment has not been satisfied before death, a person must suffer in purgatory to repay this debt which is owed to the divine Majesty.[59]

320. The souls in purgatory endure two kinds of suffering: the pain of loss which is the temporary loss of the vision of God and the endurance of physical pain. The sufferings of purgatory are more intense than any suffering on earth.[60]

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[56] Hardon, 297.
[57] Hardon, 300.
[58] Hardon, 82.
[59] Hardon.
[60] Hardon.

In summary, Roman Catholic soteriology demands that in order to achieve ultimate justification and a home in the presence of God, one must:

1. Be baptized as an infant (or in the case of those above the age of reason, go through the process of evangelism which is defined by Catholicism as going through catechism classes, followed by baptism.)
2. Initially and regularly receive the sacrament of penance (which includes confession and absolution of sins by a priest and fulfilling the task given by the priest in order to repay the debt owed to God for the offense against him).
3. Initially and regularly receive the sacrament of the eucharist.
4. Receive the sacrament of confirmation at the age of reason (or after baptism for those above the age of reason).
5. Submit to the authority of the teaching magisterium of the Church.
6. Obey the teachings of the Church.
7. Generally, live a good life as informed by the Church and conscience.
8. Receive the sacrament of the anointing of the sick at the end of one's life.
9. Spend an indeterminate time in the fires of purgatory in order to be cleansed of sin and to repay any remaining debt owed to God.

Failure to successfully complete this process such that even a single mortal sin remains on the soul at death means that person will spend eternity in hell, even if that person had otherwise been a lifelong, faithful Catholic.

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

The Council of Trent, the nineteenth ecumenical council of the Catholic Church, was a series of twenty-five sessions from 1545 to 1563, convened largely in response to the Reformation. Trent laid the theological and practical foundations for the Counter Reformation by issuing a body of condemnations to the "heresies" being promoted by the Reformers and their followers.

The significance of Episcopal Infallibility as it relates to the question of Evangelicals and Catholics being together is relevant here. As previously noted, the doctrine of Episcopal Infallibility teaches that the bishops, when acting corporately together with the bishop of Rome, are preserved from error when they make official decisions and pronouncements concerning faith and practice. Philosophically, this is why Roman Catholic doctrine cannot change by definition, because if something is ever right then it logically must always be right as it reflects truth – and if it is always right, then it cannot be open to change.

With that in mind, consider these statements (some of which have been slightly edited for brevity or clarity) from the council's sixth session as found in *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*:[61]

> **CANON IX:** If anyone shall say that by faith alone the [sinner] is justified; so as to mean that nothing else is required to co-operate in order unto the obtaining the grace of justification…let him be anathema.
>
> **CANON XI:** If anyone shall say that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the righteousness of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins…let him be anathema.

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[61] Theodore Alois Buckley, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent,* (n.p.: Aeterna Press, n.d.), loc. 983 of 7353, Kindle.

CANON XII: If anyone shall say, that justifying faith is [nothing] but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or that it is this confidence alone by which we are justified; let him be anathema.

CANON XIV: If anyone shall say that man is absolved from his sins and justified, because that he assuredly believed himself to be absolved and justified…and that, by this faith alone, absolution and justification are perfected; let him be anathema.

CANON XX: If anyone shall say that a man who is justified…is not bound to the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, but only to believe…let him be anathema.

CANON XXIV: If anyone shall say that the justice received is not preserved, and also increased …through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of justification received, but not a cause of the increase thereof; let him be anathema.

CANON XXX: If anyone shall say that after the grace of justification received, unto every penitent sinner the guilt is so remitted, and the penalty of eternal punishment so blotted out, that there remains not any penalty of temporal punishment, to be discharged either in this world, or in the next in purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be laid open; let him be anathema.

CONCLUSION

That Evangelicals and Catholics are not and cannot ever be together on the matter of justification becomes very clear once one understands three important issues:

1. The Council of Trent declared worthy of damnation the Reformation doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone apart from works.

2. The consistent teaching of the Catholic Church is that salvation comes through a combination of faith, the sacraments, submission and obedience to the Church, and good works.
3. Episcopal infallibility, as it undergirds the whole of Roman Catholic theology, means that Catholic doctrine does not and cannot ever change.

Therefore, it must be concluded that while the soteriology of individual Catholics may now be closer to that of historic Evangelicalism than those of earlier generations, this is not true of the official position of the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, if there is any convergence between Evangelicals and Catholics concerning justification, it is not because both sides are moving closer together. Rather, any movement can only come from the Evangelical side, with none from the Catholic side – such that Evangelicals must give up everything while Catholics give up nothing.

Evangelicals and Catholics are not and cannot ever be "together."

7
Old Testament Salvation

James Myers

The most significant question that anyone can ask is, "What must I do to be saved?" The only authoritative answer is found in the Bible. To most Christians the words "save" and "salvation" immediately call to mind the meaning of deliverance from the lake of fire after death or perhaps "go to heaven when you die." But this idea of salvation is not the most common meaning of those terms in the Bible. The various Hebrew words translated "to save" or "salvation" rarely relate to personal salvation from eternal judgment or ultimate entrance into heaven. The New Testament words "save" and "salvation" also have a variety of meanings in different passages. If one assumes that every occurrence of the words "save" or "salvation" refers to deliverance from the lake of fire, it will inevitably lead to an incorrect interpretation of many passages.

It is important to understand that most of the time when the words "save" and "salvation" appear in Scripture they mean something other than "final deliverance from the lake of fire."

The Hebrew word *yeshua* means "salvation," and is the Old Testament equivalent of "Jesus," whose name means salvation. The principal Old Testament verb, *yasha,* indicates a divine deliverance from any type of spiritual or temporal evil which man might encounter.

> In general, the root [yasha] implies bringing help to people in the midst of their trouble…. It is almost exclusively a theological term with Yahweh as its subject and his people as its object.[1]

This deliverance might come through men such as judges or kings[2], but most often through the agency of Yahweh.[3] Rene Lopez listed several categories of salvation in the Old Testament, including salvation from external evils in general, victory over enemies in battle, salvation from moral troubles, salvation from enemies, and a national and spiritual salvation involving Israel's possession of the nations and future restoration from exile.[4] None of these refers to individual salvation from eternal damnation.

By far, the most common usage in the Old Testament is of God's deliverance of His people from their struggles or enemies.[5] Often, however, the word refers to the future blessings of the messianic kingdom.[6] At that time, in the future earthly kingdom, Israel "will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isa 12:3), and the entire world will participate in the messianic salvation (Isa 45:22; 49:6). In that day Israel will say, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."[7] (Isa 25:9).

"But Israel is saved by the LORD with everlasting salvation…." (Isa 45:17). The messianic salvation is called "everlasting salvation"

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[1] Willem VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI) Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 556–62.
[2] Jdg 2:18; 6:14; 8:22; 12:2; 1 Sam 23:2.
[3] Ps 20:6; 34:6; Isa 61:10; Ezek 37:23; Zech 3:4.
[4] René A. López, "Old Testament Salvation - From What?" *JOTGES* 16, no. 2 (Autumn 2003): 50–7.
[5] E.g., Exod 14:30; Num 10:9; Ps 18:3; Isa 30:15; 45:17; Jer 30:17.
[6] Ps 132:16; Isa 25:9; 43:3, 5, 8, 19; Jer 31:7.
[7] All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV). Copyright July 2001 by Crossway Books/Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL, unless otherwise noted.

because the kingdom of the Messiah will last forever. David also anticipated salvation in this sense: "Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad" (Ps 14:7).

But what does the Old Testament itself say about salvation from sin? How were people saved in the Old Testament before Jesus Christ came in the flesh? It has often been said that people in the Old Testament were saved by looking forward to the cross by faith while people after Christ are saved by looking back to the cross. But is this true?

Remarkable as it may seem, there is no explicit gospel message to be found in the Old Testament. There is no specific command to believe in a future Messiah for salvation, nor is there any mention of an Old Testament saint who put faith in a promised saviour for salvation. There are no clear salvation verses like John 3:16 or Acts 16:31 to be found in the Old Testament.

How then were people justified before God in the Old Testament? Some have wrongly taught that salvation was by keeping the Mosaic Law. Even if this were true, which it is not, there would remain the question of the means of salvation before the Law was given. With regard to the Law of Moses, the Scripture is very clear: "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb 10:4). "For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" (Rom 4:3).

Justification has always been by faith and never by law. "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (Rom 3:28). Only by faith, whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament, can one be a son of Abraham. "Just as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness. Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham" (Gal 3:6–7). Therefore, the Law was unrelated to justification. "Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith'" (Gal 3:11).

The Scripture also clearly teaches that man's works cannot save from sin. "And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:" (Rom 4:5–6).

BASICS ABOUT SALVATION FROM SIN

One factor that is often neglected in discussing salvation is that the character of God must be satisfied. God is holy, absolutely pure, without sin or evil of any kind or degree. Any sin is an offense to God's holiness. God is also perfect in justice. Perfect justice demands that a penalty be paid for violation of God's righteous standard. The penalty is death of an infinite kind.

Man, who is sinful, cannot, by his own efforts, achieve the level of perfect righteousness required by a holy God. If man pays his own penalty, he himself must suffer an infinite death, which would forever exclude him from a relationship with God. But God solved this great problem. Through the death of a sinless substitute, God's righteousness and justice could be satisfied. This satisfaction took place at the cross where the sins of the world were imputed to Jesus who was judged for all sins of all people of all time. This is the one and only basis for the salvation of any person – Christ died as our substitute, satisfying the demands of an infinitely holy God.

God, who knows all things perfectly, knew from the beginning that He would send His Son into the world to pay the penalty for all sins. God postponed judgment on man's sins in the Old Testament until Jesus came and went to the cross.

> whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had

> passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom 3:25–26).

The substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the one and only basis for salvation in any age.

But how did people in the Old Testament obtain salvation from the penalty for their sins? Always by faith. But other questions arise: "What was the precise *content* of their faith?" What did they believe in order to be justified? Has it always been exactly the same or is there a different content which changed as God gave more revelation?

People who lived before the time of Christ did not have the same information that we have today. There are many things we know about the person and the work of Christ that simply were not revealed in the Old Testament. They could not understand the Saviour as we do today because they simply didn't have all of the revelation that we have. So, there are obvious differences between the content of the gospel in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The content of faith depends on the particular revelation from God at any given time.

This does not mean that there are different "ways" of salvation, but the precise content of faith, that is, what people were believing for salvation, is necessarily different. But understand clearly that the Bible absolutely does not teach more than one way of salvation, for salvation has been, is, and always will be based on the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ.

Faith was the necessary condition for salvation in the Old Testament as well as in the New: "And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them" (Jon 3:5); "And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6).

This is not a generic faith in the existence of God, but rather, a specific faith in the revelation of the true God who was the sole origin of salvation (Num 14:11; 2 Kgs 17:14). "Salvation belongs to the LORD!" (Jonah 2:9).

THREE POINTS OF VIEW

Among evangelical Christians, however, there is not a consensus as to the content of faith necessary for salvation from sin. There are three major viewpoints on this subject:

The Classic Dispensational View

The classic dispensational view is stated succinctly by Ryrie:

"The *basis* of salvation in every age is the death of Christ; the *requirement* of salvation in every age is faith; the *object* of faith in every age is God; the *content* of faith changes in the various dispensations."[8]

Two of these statements find general acceptance among all Evangelicals. Certainly, the basis of salvation is the death of Christ, for there can be no salvation if the penalty is not paid. Also, it is clear that God's requirement for man is that he have faith. However, the statement that the content of faith changes in the various dispensations is not accepted by those who hold to a covenant theology. The statement that the object of faith in every age is God is somewhat problematic, although it can be said that the *ultimate* object of faith is God. But according to the classical dispensational writers, the specific object of faith is God or some promise made by God, but not faith in a promised Seed or Saviour. This position encounters numerous

[8] Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody, 1965), 23 (emphasis original).

problems because it is nebulous. Is a generic belief in the existence of God sufficient for salvation? Does faith in *any* promise of God result in imputed righteousness? God promised Abram that he would make him a great nation (Gen 12:2). Is a person saved by believing God's promise to Abram? And what is it that people to whom no promises were made should believe?

Paul Enns, another dispensational theologian, said this:

> God's revelation to man differs in different dispensations, but man's responsibility is to respond to God in faith according to the manner in which God has revealed Himself. Thus, when God revealed Himself to Abraham and promised him a great posterity, Abraham believed God, and the Lord imputed righteousness to the patriarch (Gen. 15:6). Abraham would have known little about Christ, but he responded in faith to the revelation of God and was saved. Similarly, under the law God promised life through faith. Whereas the Israelite under the law knew about the importance of the blood sacrifice, his knowledge of a suffering Messiah was still limited—but he was saved by faith (Hab. 2:4). Dispensationalists thus emphasize that in every dispensation salvation is by God's grace through faith according to His revelation.[9]

The Covenant Theology View

The view of covenant theology is that salvation has always been by faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation in the Old Testament was by faith in Jesus, except that they didn't yet know His name. This is seen in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter VII, Section 3:

> Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, (Gal. 3:21, Rom. 8:3, Rom.

[9] Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 522.

> 3:20–21, Gen. 3:15, Isa. 42:6) commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, (Mark 16:15–16, John 3:16, Rom. 10:6–9, Gal. 3:11)….[10]

Covenant theologians are explicit in declaring that Jesus was the object of faith in the Old Testament and that God has always required faith in Christ and His redemptive work in order to receive eternal life.

> …faith in the promised Redeemer was required from the beginning, but from the admitted fact that the Old Testament is full of the doctrine of redemption by the Messiah, it follows that those who received the religion of the Old Testament received that doctrine, and exercised faith in the promise of God concerning his Son.[11]
>
> Abel's faith was, in substance, faith in the atoning work of Christ, the promised Redeemer.[12]

A Modified Dispensational View

There is a position between the classic dispensational view and the covenant theology view, and that is faith in a saviour promised by God. The revelation increased as time went on, and the requirement for salvation was faith in this deliverer as He was revealed at any given time. So, they could have faith in a "seed" that was promised, faith in a Messiah, faith in Yeshua, and yet not believe in Jesus specifically, for Jesus had not yet been revealed.

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[10] *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996).
[11] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Reprinted 1989), 2:372.
[12] James Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 2:185.

Many Old Testament believers did not believe what we now know to be essential doctrines about salvation, yet they were saved. They were not told to believe on Jesus for salvation. Therefore, while the mandated content of belief is different from one age to another, there is a minimal, absolutely necessary soteriological content of faith for all people during all ages in all places. "Most of the believers who came to faith before NT times are those who give evidence that their faith was based on the God who disclosed himself in the Seed of the Woman."[13] From the very beginning God had a plan for man's salvation which is centered in the Seed, the one promised in the protoevangelium.

Protoevangelium – the First Declaration of the Gospel

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen 2:16–17).

They ate. They died immediately. It was a spiritual death. This is the exercise of God's righteousness and justice. This death penalty is passed down through Adam to every person born through procreation (Rom 5:12–14). Man is born physically alive but spiritually dead. He is separated from God – no relationship, no fellowship. This is manifested by the attempt of the man and the woman to solve their problem by covering themselves with fig leaves and hiding themselves when they heard the Lord coming. They made excuses, but the Lord got them to admit their wrongdoing. God then gave three prophetic curses: one each for Satan, the man, and the woman (Gen 3:14 ff).

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[13] Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Is It The Case That Christ Is The Same Object Of Faith In The Old Testament? (Genesis 15:1–6)" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55:2 (2012).

First, to the serpent He announced that it would suffer perpetual humiliation, evidenced by its crawling. Then God announced the ultimate destruction of Satan by "the seed of the woman." This reference to the seed of the woman is the first promise of Messiah in the Bible (cf. Isa 7:14). This seed must be the Messiah, the virgin-born Son of God, who would eventually destroy sin and Satan forever.

Obviously, they did not understand "her seed" as a reference to a virgin birth. What they could understand was that one would be born who would undo what they had done in their sin, and that this one would destroy the serpent. The serpent would deal a fatal blow to the seed of the woman. This fatal blow was delivered at the cross, although Adam and Eve would not have understood this as a reference to the cross. But ultimately, "her seed" (referring to one person) would defeat Satan. We see in the genealogies that the reckoning was always through the father and not the mother. Consequently, later generations looking back to Genesis 3:15 would recognize that the one who was promised there would be unique––true humanity because He would be born of a woman, but conceived without the participation of a man (c.f., Isa 7:14).

Second, God pronounced a curse on the woman: she would experience pain in childbirth, and she would struggle with a continual desire to dominate her husband. Finally, because the man listened to his wife who tempted him to sin, the man was told that the ground would be cursed, and as he expended his energy in an effort to produce food for living, he would weary himself in frustrating toil even to the point of death and would eventually return as dust to the very soil from which he came.

Then the Lord made garments of animal skin for them and covered them. The obvious understanding is that God killed an animal to get the skin. At this point they gain knowledge of physical death, which is a faint picture of the spiritual death which they had already experienced. Certainly, God could have created clothing for them

out of nothing, or He could have used existing plant material, but an innocent animal gave his life in order to provide what man needed. The man and the woman tried to cover their nakedness by making garments of fig leaves, but what was needed was something greater, something to cover not only their physical bodies, but their spiritual nakedness as well, a spiritual covering which could only be provided by the death of a substitute, and which could only be received by faith.

We are not told in the narrative that God explained to Adam and Eve the significance of that death, but surely, they saw that it was through the death of an innocent animal that God provided the covering which they needed because of their sins. Nor are we told in the text that the death of this animal was a picture of the promised seed of the woman who would die for their sins. But we can see that they understood that they must put faith in the one whom God promised would come to destroy Satan and the sin he brought into the world. We know this because immediately after God pronounced the curses, Adam called his wife "Eve" which means "life" because she was the mother of all living, a clear indication that Adam understood the implications of Genesis 3:15––that God would provide a Saviour, "the seed of the woman," who would solve the problem of death which came about as a result of his sin.

Cain (Genesis 4:1)

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD" (Gen 4:1).

Eve makes a statement about her firstborn son, Cain, in Genesis 4:1. The Hebrew text says literally, *I have gotten a man: Jehovah.* "I have gotten a man: - (COLON) - Jehovah." That is the literal rendering.[14]

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[14] See Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Messianic Bible Study Collection*, vol. 50 (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1983), 12.

This verse shows that Eve understood that the promise of Genesis 3:15 included a personal divine entrance into human history by birth, as a child, to be born of a woman. She believed that Cain, her firstborn son, was the fulfillment of that promise, and therefore she said, "I have gotten a man: Jehovah."

Now, her theology was correct. The Messiah would be both God and Man. It would be the divine entry of God Himself into the human realm, by being born as a child, born of a woman (Gal 4:4). It was Eve's application of the promise that was wrong. Cain proved not to be the one she thought he was.

The narrative goes on to tell how Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord. Cain brought produce from the land; Abel brought the firstborn of his sheep and goats, which he sacrificed to the Lord. Why would they offer sacrifices? There is no indication in the text that the Lord had commanded them to do so. But, surely, they must have received instructions from the Lord. Why else would they do it? Hebrews 11:4 tells us that "By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous,".

In what was Abel expressing faith? He offered an animal sacrifice. He had to kill it, gut it, skin it, and remove the fat from the internal organs, which is also declared to be a part of the offering. This, too, is significant. The fat was considered to be the best part and was to be given in offering to the Lord (see Lev 3, 4, 7–10). While we are not given the reasons why Abel did this, it was obviously in obedience to divine instruction. He was believing instruction that had been given by the Lord. Did he understand that the death of the lamb was a picture of Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)?

But Abel offered it in faith. Faith in what or in whom? Obviously, he was believing God for something, and this faith resulted in his being declared righteous. It is not unreasonable to think that

he understood about a substitutionary death – one who is innocent dying in the place of one who is guilty. The offering of this sacrifice resulted in the declaration that he had been justified.

Also, in Genesis 4:6–7 there is an interesting question from God: "The LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?'"

Cain could be accepted by God if he would do well. In what way could he do well? This is not specified in the text, but surely it must be obedience to a divine command. Man can only approach a holy God in the way specified by God. Since the Lord accepted Abel's offering and a declaration was made that he was justified before God, it can only be that "doing well" on the part of Cain would be to offer a blood sacrifice in faith. This would be an expression of faith that the death of an innocent substitute would satisfy the demands of a holy God.

Noah (Genesis 8:20)

Immediately following the flood when Noah came out of the ark with the animals, he built an altar and offered sacrifices on it from every clean animal and bird. Why did he do this? We are not told in the text that God had commanded him to do this. But, in this way he worshiped the Lord, and the Lord was pleased with his offering. It can only be that Noah also understood the principle of substitutionary sacrifice. There is no other explanation.

Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3)

According to Acts 7:2, While Abram was still in Ur of the Chaldees, God had spoken to him.

> Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And

> I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:1–3).

Would God make such promises to one who was not saved? Unthinkable!

Abraham (Genesis 15:6)

According to Genesis 15:6: "And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness."

This verse is often interpreted to mean that Abraham was justified at that time because he believed God's promise that he would have a literal physical son of his own. However, it is probable that the statement in Genesis 15:6 is stating a past fact, that Abram had previously believed in the Lord while he was living in Ur before he ever arrived in Canaan (Heb 11:8). The Hebrew grammar of Genesis 15:6 indicates a break in the narrative flow from the previous verses and is simply asserting the reality that Abram had previously believed in the Lord, at which time the Lord credited that faith to him as righteousness.[15] He was not simply believing a promise about becoming a father (although he certainly did believe that), but this says he believed *in* God. The result of this faith in God was that the Lord imputed righteousness to Abram.

Abram was saved while he was a Gentile, but later he became the patriarch of all Jews. He is, therefore, considered to be the example of all who are saved, whether Jew or Gentile, for all are saved in the same way, by faith.

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[15] See Allen P. Ross, Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 310ff.

In Genesis 12:3 it is said, "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Later in Genesis 22:18 it is stated, "and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed …." What did Abraham understand about this statement? We know from our New Testament perspective that the seed is a reference to Messiah, Jesus Christ. "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.' So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith" (Gal 3:8–9).

Abraham offered animal sacrifices on numerous occasions. Even though it is not written that he was commanded to do so, he did it frequently. This would indicate an understanding of approaching God through the blood of an innocent sacrifice.

Genesis 22

In this passage God told Abraham to offer his son Isaac on an altar, but then God intervened and stopped him from doing so; God Himself provided a ram for a sacrifice, and this is certainly significant. What we do know is that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son because he believed in the ability of God to raise the dead (Heb 11:19). So, he also knew about resurrection.

The Song of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 is the clearest presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work of providing salvation in the Old Testament. He is designated as the servant of Yahweh who will bear the sins of the world. The substitutionary nature of His death is explicit:

But he was wounded for **our** transgressions; he was crushed for **our** iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have turned every one to his own way; and **the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all (**Isa 53:5–6).

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes **an offering for sin**, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, **and he shall bear their iniquities.** Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because **he poured out his soul to death** and was **numbered with the transgressors**; yet he **bore the sin of many**, and **makes intercession for the transgressors** (Isa 53:10–12).[16]

Isaiah 28:16

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: Whoever believes will not be in haste (Isa 28:16).

This verse is quoted or referred to no fewer than eight times in the New Testament. The stone is the Messiah, the Saviour (see Ps 118:22; Zech 3:9; 1 Pet 2:4–7; Acts 4:10–12).

The last phrase of the verse, following the Hebrew text, is translated in the New King James Version, "He who believes in it [the Cornerstone] will not act hastily" that is, flee because of fear. However, the Greek translation of the Hebrew reads, "the one believing on it shall not be ashamed" (see Rom 9:33, and 1 Pet 2:6) which is substantially the same idea, that the one who puts faith in Him shall not have the shame of judgment, nor flee in sudden panic (Isa 30:15; 32:17).

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[16] Emphasis added.

Salvation is always by faith, based on the work of Christ on the cross. God withheld judgment of pre-cross sins until Jesus became our substitute on the cross (Rom 3:25–26). However, Old Testament people could be saved by believing what God had promised, that there would be a redeemer, a saviour, an intercessor, a sinless substitute who would bear the sins of the world, pay the penalty for man's sins and satisfy the demands of infinite justice. Those who would believe in God for this Deliverer were justified or declared righteous before God, for He imputes His righteousness to all who put faith in Him for salvation.

Can we Find "Jesus" in the Old Testament?

Throughout the Old Testament more and more information is given about a deliverer, a saviour, a substitutionary sacrifice who would die for the sins of the world. This one is designated as Messiah or Yeshua, which is the Hebrew equivalent to Jesus.

When the word "salvation" in the Old Testament occurs along with the Hebrew suffix meaning "my", "your", or "his," it is the same word, "Yeshua" (Jesus), used in Matthew 1:21. When the angel spoke to Joseph, husband of Mary he said: "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, [YESHUA—SALVATION] for he will save his people from their sins."

The name of Jesus occurs in the Old Testament in Hebrew form, YESHUA. When Jacob was about to die, as he was blessing his sons and prophetically foretelling their future experiences in those blessings, he said, "I wait for your salvation, O LORD" (Gen 49:18). Or it could be translated, "In your Yeshua (Jesus) I am hoping (trusting), O Lord!" Jacob was trusting in Yeshua (Jesus) for salvation. Jacob was already a saved man and has not waited until his dying moments to start trusting in the Lord. He just reminded God that he was trusting in Yeshua for salvation, and at the same time he was comforting his own soul.

In Isaiah 12:2–3 salvation is mentioned three times, with Jesus as the personification of the word "salvation": "Behold, God is my salvation [YESHUA (Jesus – in His pre-incarnation and eternal existence)]. I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation [YESHUA (Jesus)]. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation [YESHUA (Jesus)]."

Isaiah makes this more explicit in Isaiah 62:11: "Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, "Behold, your salvation [YESHUA] comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him."

Here salvation is a person and not a thing or an event. HE comes, HIS reward is with HIM, and HIS work is before HIM.

When Simeon came to the Temple and took the baby Jesus in his arms, he said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation [YESHUA (Jesus)] (Luke 2:29–30).

> If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities (Pss 130:3–8).

CONCLUSION

People before the time of Christ did not have a full picture of the Saviour and the cross. However, they did have an adequate picture that was sufficient for salvation. God has always revealed His plan of

salvation and that revelation has always been sufficient to bring man to salvation.

As it says in John 5:24: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."

So, salvation in the Old Testament was not by some generic faith in God, but by faith in the God who would send the Saviour. Faith in a god who is not sending the Saviour does not save.

How were people in the Old Testament saved? By faith in the salvation promised by God! This salvation is a Person, the promised Seed of the woman, the promised Seed of Abraham, the promised Seed of David, the promised Deliverer, Yeshua.

By means of faith in the Messiah, as He was revealed at any point in history, man is saved from his sins. As Romans 4:16 says, "That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace."

8
Baptisms

James Myers

This chapter will give a brief survey of the New Testament words for baptism, identify the various baptisms found in the New Testament, and then examine each of them in more detail.

The word baptize (from *baptizo*) is transliterated from Greek straight into English. Often, a transliteration offers little understanding regarding the meaning of a word. Various definitions include:

- "to put or go under water in a variety of senses"[1]
- "to immerse for a religious purpose"[2]
- "to dip in or under water"[3]
- "to dip in or under…to immerse"[4]
- "consisting of the processes of immersion, submersion and emergence"[5]

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[1] W. Arndt, F. W. Danker, W. Bauer, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 164.
[2] E. W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 1975), 80.
[3] Henry Liddell and Robert Scott, *Greek English Lexicon* (Oxford, Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1999), 146.
[4] Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1 (Grand rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964–1976), 529–30.
[5] W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, vol. 2 (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1981), 96.

- "the application of water as a rite of purification or initiation; a Christian sacrament" [6]
- "to dip in or under," "to dye," "to immerse," "to sink," "to drown," "to bathe," "wash" [7]

In passages such as Matthew 26:23, Mark 14:20, Luke 16:24, John 13:26, and Revelation 19:13, the definitions given above are applicable and make good sense, but in numerous other passages they simply will not work. This is because of the fact that these definitions all involve a liquid such as water, blood, or a solution for dyeing something. But there are other types of baptism which do not involve a liquid solution at all. For example, in Matthew 3:11 it is stated that Jesus will baptize with fire and with the Holy Spirit. Clearly, there is no water in those two baptisms.

Ultimately, it is the usage of a word in its context that determines meaning. Gordon Fee has stated, "In any piece of literature, words are the basic building blocks for conveying meaning. In exegesis it is especially important to remember that *words function in a context.* Therefore, although any given word may have a broad or narrow *range of meaning*, the aim of word study in exegesis is to try to understand as precisely as possible what the author was trying to convey by his use of *this* word in this context."[8]

Two Greek verbs must be examined: *bapto* (to dip) and *baptizo* (plunge, immerse, overwhelm).

The clearest example that shows the meaning of *baptizo* is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about

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[6] Merrill F. Unger, *The new Unger's Bible Dictionary,* revised and updated (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988).

[7] Kittel and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary*, 92. The NT uses *báptō* only in the literal sense – e.g., "to dip" (Luke 16:24), "to dye" (Rev 19:13), and *baptízō* only in a cultic sense, mostly "to baptize."

[8] Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster, John Knox Press, 2002), 79.

200 BC. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be "dipped" (*bapto*) into boiling water and then "baptized" (*baptizo*) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptizing the vegetable, produces a permanent change.[9]

These words are used in a variety of contexts:

Classical Greek (800–200 BC) – dip, plunge, sink, overwhelm

1. Draw wine or water by dipping a cup into a bowl
2. To dye clothes by dipping in dye
3. To dip in poison
4. To dip a spear in blood
5. Ships destroyed at sea (sank)[10]

Septuagint (third century BC) – to dip; be overwhelmed

1. Isa 21:4 – overwhelmed by lawlessness
2. 2 Kgs 5:14 – Naaman dipped in the river to cleanse himself.

APOCRYPHA

1. Judith "bathed" (*bapto*) at a spring (i.e., a ceremonial bath for cleansing) (Judith 12:7).
2. A man washes himself (*baptize*) to cleanse himself from ceremonial uncleanness (Sirach 34:25).

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[9] J. Strong, *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* (n.p.: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1995), 911.
[10] H. G. Liddell. A lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English lexicon (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996), 146.

OLD TESTAMENT

Ritual baths were observed in keeping with commands to bathe.

> The Law ordained that various states and degrees of corporeal defilement were to be remedied by the purification of the bath. The purificative bath ordained in Lev. xv. 19-33 was always held to be one of the most essential of observances, and great stress was laid upon its punctual observance by the women.[11]

Archaeologists have discovered many *mikva'ot* (*mikveh* or *mikvah* is the singular form) around Jerusalem. Mikvah is a pool or bath of clear water in which immersion renders ritually clean a person who has become ritually unclean. The person would immerse himself in the water. This ritual was repeated many times as needed for ritual purification. This was quite likely the precursor to the baptism of John and Christian baptism today. However, the mode and the purpose for the ritual bath were quite different from baptism.

INTERTESTAMENTAL ERA

1. Jewish proselyte immersion. Part of the process of a Gentile converting to Judaism was a complete immersion in water. The individual dipped himself in water, for the purpose of cleansing the body externally. Peter contrasts this external cleansing with Christian baptism (I Pet 3:21).
   "According to rabbinical teachings, which dominated even during the existence of the Temple (Pes. viii. 8), Baptism,

[11] http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2661-baths-bathing.

next to circumcision and sacrifice, was an absolutely necessary condition to be fulfilled by a proselyte to Judaism." [12]

2. Jewish ritual cleansing of the body to ensure personal purification externally (see Heb 10:22). At Qumran near the Dead Sea, the monastic community there in the first century seems to have practiced regular ritual bathing.

EARLY CHRISTIAN ERA, EXTRABIBLICAL USAGE

1. To immerse, literally, in water – to sink, to drown
2. To be overwhelmed metaphorically "by faults, desires, sicknesses[13]

New Testament Usage – "to be identified with" (be immersed, to wash)

1. Ceremonial washing/cleansing of objects (Mark 7:4, 8; Heb 6:2; 9:10)
2. A ritual in which a person is immersed in water to indicate identification with a person or an object (Acts 1:5; 1 Cor 1:16) Ritual baptisms serve as a public testimony – a declaration by the person being baptized – that he desires to be identified with the reality of whatever the water signifies.
3. An actual identification of a person with something, but without ritual (1 Cor 10:1–2; 10:13)

From a study of baptism and related words in the Bible, a definition can be made: "to place into or identify with." That is, in baptism,

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[12] http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2456-baptism.

[13] Oepke, A. βάπτω, βαπτίζω, βαπτισμός, βάπτισμα, βαπτιστής. Kittel and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 530, electronic edition.

one thing or person is placed into or identified with another thing or person. The identification may be actual or it may be symbolic through ritual.

Other related words include:

1. *Baptisma* (a ritual or the act of identification)
2. *Baptistes* (one who performs the ritual of baptism)
3. *Baptos* (adjective) (dipped, dyed, bright-colored)

CLASSIFICATIONS OF BAPTISMS

Baptisms in the Bible can be classified in the following ways:

Wet or dry baptisms

Baptisms are classified as wet or dry depending on whether or not water is involved in the identification. The wet baptisms are all symbolic in ritual; the dry baptisms are actual identifications without any ritual.

Real or ritual baptisms

Real baptisms (the baptism of Moses, the baptism of the Cross, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the baptism of fire) each involve an actual identification of one thing or person with another thing or person, whereas ritual baptisms (the baptism of John, the baptism of Jesus, and the water baptism of the church-age believer) occur when one thing or person is representative of another thing or person. The one undergoing a ritual baptism is identified with the water, but the water is symbolic of something real. For John, the water used was symbolic of the kingdom of God. For Jesus, the water was symbolic of obedience to the Father's will for Him. To

the church-age believer, the water is symbolic of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Unique or common baptisms

Unique baptisms are classified as such because of the unique person or event taking place (e.g., the baptism of the cross and the baptism of Jesus). The unique baptisms of Jesus are special because Jesus Himself is special. Baptisms that are common are so because they involve many persons without reference to a special person, setting, or requirement.

DISTINCT NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISMS

A survey of the New Testament yields seven (or possibly eight) distinct baptisms in all:

1. The baptism of Moses (1 Cor 10:1–2) (dry, real, common).
2. The baptism of the cross (Mark 10:38) (dry, real, and unique).
3. The baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13; Matt 3:11; John 14:16, 17) (dry, real, common).
4. The baptism of fire (Matt 3:11, 12; Luke 3:16–17) (dry, real, common).
5. The baptism of John (Matt 3:4–11) (wet, symbolic, common).
6. The baptism of Jesus (Matt 3:13–17) (wet, symbolic, unique).
7. The baptism of the believer (Matt 28:16–20) (wet, symbolic, common).
8. The baptism of Noah's ark (1 Pet 3:20–21).

While the baptism of Noah's ark it is not specifically stated to be a baptism, it is designated as a type of baptism. Hence, some writers list it as a distinct baptism.

The Baptism of Moses (real, dry, common)

The setting for the baptism of Moses is the account in Exodus 12:33–14:30 where the Israelites were redeemed from slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt. God led them to the Red Sea where He miraculously parted the sea and "the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left" (Exodus 14:29). There was water present, but no one got wet. They all went through on dry ground. "Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor 10:1–2).

It is clear that Paul was thinking of baptism in the sense of identification when he referred to the Israelites as being "baptized into Moses" since none of the Jews got wet as they passed through on dry ground. Their baptism (identification) was with Moses, not water. The only ones who got wet were the Egyptians who were neither saved nor benefited from the water that immersed them.

Because Paul used the word "baptism" to identify the Israelites with Moses, according to Paul's usage, the word "baptism" could be used to identify any person with another person. However, Paul's use of "baptism" with reference to Old Testament characters is without parallel anywhere else in the Bible. Nevertheless, this nuance of the word "baptism" would have been familiar to his audience.

The Baptism of John the Baptist (ritual, wet, common)

The baptism of John was a ritual baptism used as a means of identifying people with his message concerning the kingdom of God which was at hand and to encourage others to repent by believing in the Christ (Matt 3:6, 11; Mark 1:4–5, 8–9; 11:30; Luke 3:3, 7, 12, 16,

21; 7:29–30; 20:4; John 1:25–26, 28, 31, 33; 3:22–23, 26: 4:1–2; 10:40; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 19:3–5).

The people would have also understood by John's baptism that cleansing was necessary for entrance into the kingdom of God which was being offered.

> I indeed baptize you with [in] water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with [in] the Holy Spirit and fire (Matt 3:11).

The prepositional phrase "in water" indicates that it was a ritual baptism. It also implies that baptism is not "wet" until it is associated with water. There are other baptisms which are not in water, such as the baptisms with fire and the Holy Spirit.

> But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him (Luke 7:30).

It is clearly stated that those who rejected John's baptism in water were rejecting God's will. This verse also shows that John's baptism was from God (cf. Luke 20:8). To reject John's baptism was tantamount to rejecting his message about the Messiah. Once Israel as a nation rejected the plan of God for them, John's baptism came to an end. John the Baptist's baptism is not practiced today.

In Acts 19 the Apostle Paul was in Ephesus and met some disciples of John the Baptizer.

> And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When

they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:3–5).

When John was baptizing and telling people to repent, he was actually telling them to believe in Jesus who was coming after him. His baptism had no value apart from a proper understanding of Christ. That was true then and it is true today. This verse explains so much of John's baptism and how believing in Christ was the real issue.

God called John to baptize in order to prepare the way of the King who was coming. John identified the King, and then John was phased out of the picture in order to let the Lord begin His ministry.

When Josephus wrote of John the Baptist, he also recognized that baptism was not for obtaining righteousness but was the public testimony of having previously received it.

> The washing would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away of some sins, but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness.[14]

The Baptism of Jesus (ritual, wet, unique)

These verses clearly identify Jesus as the Christ:

> Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him (Matt 3:13).
>
> When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him (Matt 3:16).

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[14] Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 484. (Ant. xviii. 5, § 2)

> I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God" (John 1:33–34).

When Jesus came to John for baptism, John was hesitant, not wanting to perform what the Lord had requested.

> Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him (Matt 3:13–15)

John wanted to deny Jesus his baptism because he knew that Jesus had no "need" of it as did the sinful people who were coming to him. Those who came to John's baptism were "confessing their sins," but there was nothing for Jesus to confess. John was a saved person at this point and yet he still saw a "need" to be baptized with a baptism which only Jesus could offer, the baptism of the Holy Spirit which he had been declaring (Matt 3:11). This baptism, however, was not essential for salvation.

Several points of observation should be made here: (1) Because Jesus was unique His baptism was unique. (2) Because Jesus was perfect and had no sins of which to repent, thus His water baptism was different from the baptism of John and was unique. (3) Jesus was baptized to "fulfill all righteousness," – to complete the will of the Father for Him. (4) Since Jesus' baptism was unique, the believer can never be said, "to follow the Lord in baptism." S. Lewis Johnson stated,

> The Spirit's coming was His anointing, and His anointing is His induction into the office of Messiah. Peter confirms this when he says

in Acts 10:38, *"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power."* This, then, was the ordination of the Servant.[15]

The baptism of Jesus was unique and cannot be equated with any other baptism.

The Baptism of the Cross (real, dry, unique)

> But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized" (Mark 10:38–39).
>
> But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! (Luke 12:50).
>
> He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matt 26:39).
>
> So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?" (John 18:11).

In Luke 12:50, Jesus identified His coming baptism with death. In the garden of Gethsemane, He referred to His coming death as a cup. It is as if the sins of the world were in a cup and Christ drank that cup. All of the sins of mankind were poured out on Christ when He was on the cross. He is identified with our sins as God the Father laid them on Him while on the cross (Isa 53:5–6; 2 Cor 5:21). In Mark 10:38–39 both the cup and the baptism are brought together in reference to the cross.

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[15] S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., "The Baptism of Christ," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 123, no. 491 (July 1966): 228.

The use of the word "baptism" in the above verses must be considered "dry" since Jesus' crucifixion did not involve any water. This was a real baptism since Jesus was actually identified with our sins. "He was made sin for us" (2 Cor 5:21).

It is striking that Jesus would declare to the disciples that they would share in His baptism. He is possibly referring to one of two things:

(1) The disciples would be *identified* with Christ on the cross through positional sanctification. That is, they themselves would not go to the cross to pay for the sins of others as Christ was doing, but that their life would be *identified* with His as He hung on the cross (Rom 6:3–4, 6; cf. Gal 2:20).

(2) Just as Christ was to suffer by the hands of sinners for righteousness' sake, so too the disciples would suffer at the hands of others undeservedly. Thus, their *identification* with Christ's suffering would be experiential, though not identical. Peter and Paul both spoke of sharing in the sufferings of Christ in this sense (1 Pet 4:13; Phil 3:10).

The disciples to whom Jesus spoke were not sent to a cross to bear the sins of the world. Yet, they are clearly said to be baptized with the same baptism that Jesus underwent. This cannot be a reference to Jesus' water baptism because that had already occurred in the past. The most plausible explanation would be the positional identification with Christ on the cross brought about by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The Baptism of church-age believers (ritual, wet, common)

> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen (Matt 28:19–20).

Just prior to His ascension into heaven Jesus gave the command to go and make disciples of all the nations. This would require a two-fold trust: evangelism and edification. Through evangelism people are brought to faith in Christ. This faith would be publicly declared through the ritual of baptism. A disciple must also be taught biblical truths which must be believed and obeyed.

The act of water baptism for the believer pictures the reality of Christ's finished work on the cross, as well as His burial and resurrection. Baptism for the believer is a picture of death and life. In going down under the water, he is being identified with the death Christ on the cross. Being raised back up out of the water he is raised with Christ out of death and into life.

Just as it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin (Heb 10:4), so it is not possible for water baptism to take away sins. It is, however, a picture of spiritual truth. If a person is baptized although he has not believed in Christ for salvation, his baptism means nothing. Water baptism for the believer becomes an act of obedience after salvation, perhaps one of the first signs of his salvation, a public testimony of faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross.

It appears in the New Testament that people were baptized shortly after their salvation. The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–38) was excited about his salvation and wanted to be baptized immediately, and Philip was glad to oblige. "Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?'" (Acts 8:36).

Those in the household of Cornelius who believed in Christ as a result of Peter's preaching were baptized immediately. "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" (Acts 10:47).

Notice that these believers were baptized after they had "received the Holy Spirit" and not before. Baptism comes after salvation, never before it!

> It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:1–5).

This is the only place in the New Testament where a person was baptized a second time. This was because they were living in a transitional period. They had been saved before the Church began on Pentecost. Believers before Pentecost did not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. All who become believers after Pentecost are baptized by the Holy Spirit at the moment of their salvation. So, this is a unique situation. It was necessary for those believers to undergo a second baptism so that they could make the transition into the blessings of the church age; otherwise, they retained the status of Old Testament believers under the Law.

> Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void (1 Cor 1:13–17).

The gospel is the good news that people need to hear in order to have faith in Christ for salvation (1 Cor 15:3–4). If baptism were

essential for salvation, then Paul would never have separated it from the gospel as he so clearly does in this verse. Paul strongly says, "Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel." The gospel message speaks of the finished work of Christ on the cross and informs us that if we will believe only in Him, we will have eternal life. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Water baptism does not save! It only testifies of salvation after one has already believed in Christ. The gospel is a separate issue from water baptism, and those who confuse the two find themselves in the same place as the Corinthian Church – divided.

"Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?" (1 Cor 15:29). The reference of those "who are baptized for the dead" is obscure. Leon Morris stated that there are thirty to forty different explanations of this verse.[16] One is based on grammatical considerations: The phrase "baptism for the dead" is understood in the sense of unbelievers being baptized "because of" believers who have died.[17] In this interpretation unbelievers decide to become Christians and be baptized because of the influence of a believer who had recently died.

Another interpretation views this verse as teaching a proxy baptism:

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[16] Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries series (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), 219.

[17] A. T. Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1975), 359; G. G. Findlay, "St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 2:931; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of I and II Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963), 690; John F. MacArthur, *1 Corinthians* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 425; and J. K. Howard, "Baptism for the Dead; A Study of 1 Corinthians 15:29," *Evangelical Quarterly* 37 (July–September 1965): 140.

> This verse probably refers to proxy baptism, the custom of undergoing baptism for someone who died before he or she could experience baptism. Evidently the Corinthians were practicing this for people who became Christians on their deathbeds or under other conditions that made it difficult or impossible for them to undergo baptism in water. Paul's mention of the custom is not necessarily an endorsement of it. On the other hand, he did not specifically condemn it either.
>
> Whether he approved of it or not, the Corinthian believers were evidently doing it. Paul used this practice to argue for the reality of resurrection. His point was that if there is no physical resurrection it is foolish to undergo baptism for someone who had died because in that case they are dead and gone forever.[18]
>
> Suppose, on the other hand, there is a resurrection. When God will raise those baptized by proxy, they would not suffer shame for failure to undergo baptism while they were alive. Those who had not benefited from proxy baptism would suffer embarrassment.[19]

Another viewpoint is that those being baptized are a new generation of believers who stand in the place of believers who have died.[20]

The Mormons have developed an elaborate theology of baptism by proxy based on a gross misunderstanding of this one verse. In their view the proxy baptism become efficacious in the salvation for those who died without baptism.

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[18] Robertson and Plummer, 360.

[19] Thomas Constable, *Thomas Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (2003), 1 Cor 15:29. Galaxie Software.

[20] See the commentaries for other views and John D. Reaume, "Another Look at 1 Corinthians 15:29, 'Baptized for the Dead,'" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152, no. 608 (October–December 1995):457–75. Joel R. White, "Baptized on Account of the Dead: The Meaning of 1 Corinthians 15:29 in its Context," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116, no. 3 (1997): 487–99, believed the first reference to "the dead" in this verse refers to the apostles who had died metaphorically (cf. v. 31).

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit (real, dry, common)

> As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matt 3:11).

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is unique to the church age. When John spoke of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Matthew 3:11, he recognized it as something yet future. This point is reinforced by the statement of Jesus just prior to His ascension into heaven: "For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5).

Again, the reference is to a future event, indicating that this baptism had not previously occurred.

John F. Walvoord writes:

> As this ministry is not found in the Old Testament and is not included in any prophecies regarding the millennium, it is peculiarly the work of the Holy Spirit for the present age, beginning with Pentecost and ending at the resurrection of the righteous when the living Church is raptured.... It becomes the distinguishing mark of the saints of the present age, the secret of the peculiar intimacy and relationship of Christians to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, essential to a proper doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that it be recognized as the distinguishing characteristic of the Church, the body of Christ.[21]
>
> He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16).

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[21] John F. Walvoord, "The Person of the Holy Spirit, Part 7" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 98, no. 392 (Oct 1941): 422.

Some writers believe Mark 16:16 refers to the baptism of the Spirit because salvation is in view. Since salvation is completely the work of God and does not involve any work for man apart from faith alone in Christ alone, the baptism here cannot be a ritual that leads to or adds to salvation. The baptism of this verse makes no reference to water, spirit, fire, cup, or person, therefore, the context alone must determine its meaning. Lewis Sperry Chafer writes:

Baptism is mentioned as though it had saving power. The reference evidently is to real baptism. On this passage Doctor G. Campbell Morgan writes:

> *He that believeth* (that is the human condition) *and is baptized* (that is the divine miracle) *shall be saved*. When the negative side is stated, baptism is omitted as being unnecessary; for he that disbelieveth cannot be baptized. If it is water baptism, he can; but if it is the baptism of the Spirit, he cannot.[22]

An alternative interpretation is that the baptism in this verse refers to the baptism of the cup, the only baptism in the book of Mark other than two references to the baptism of John the Baptist.[23]

> Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom 6:3–4).

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[22] Lewis S. Chafer, "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 109, no. 435 (July 1952): 216.
[23] James F. Myers, "Mark 16:16–18: An Alternate View," *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 7, no. 1 (Jan–Mar 2001): 2.

This verse speaks of baptism as an accomplished work in which believers are placed into Christ Jesus. Only the Holy Spirit can place a person into Christ Jesus (1 Cor 12:13). Even though the word "baptism" is not qualified in any way (i.e. water, Spirit, fire, etc.) the context points to results that can only be accomplished by God.

> For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom 6:4).

This explains that the baptism of the previous verse is a real identification and not a ritual. A ritual could not unite one to Christ in His death or His resurrection.

> For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor 12:13).

This verse clearly indicates something accomplished by means of the Holy Spirit, a baptism which identifies a person with Christ by joining him to Christ. There is no other way for a believer to be joined to Christ or placed into the body of Christ. Regarding this verse Chafer said,

> This emphasis upon unity which verse 12 deposes, however, is only to prepare the way for the revelation of how members are joined to this Body. They are said to be baptized into this Body by one Spirit. The reference to one Spirit is but the continuation of that which has been declared time and again through the preceding portion of this chapter, namely, how it is by the one and selfsame Spirit that the varied gifts are wrought. Thus also, though many are baptized into the Body of Christ, it is wrought by the one Spirit in every instance. The central truth is that the one Spirit baptizes all—every believer— into the one

> Body. What is thus accomplished for every believer is a part of his very salvation, else it could not include each one.[24]

The Holy Spirit placing every believer into the body of Christ is exclusive to the church age and is a supernatural act that only the Holy Spirit can accomplish.

> For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:27).

One of the benefits of being baptized into Christ is that all racial, social, or gender differences are eradicated, and we are all one in Christ. There is equality of all Christians in their position in Christ.

> There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all (Eph 4:5).

This verse has been understood by many to refer to a believer's baptism. This is not likely because Paul is listing seven things that are true for all believers. The only baptism which is true for all believers is the baptism of the Spirit. It is reasonable to conclude that Ephesians 4:5 is a reference to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and not to water baptism, since all the items in this context are works of God and reference to a ritual would be out of keeping with the thrust of the passage.

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[24] Lewis S. Chafer, "Baptism of the Holy Spirit," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 109, no. 435 (Jul 1952): 216.

> For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; **having been buried with Him in baptism**, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions (Col 2: 9–13).

Just as there is a "circumcision made without hands," likewise, there is a baptism that comes only by means of the Holy Spirit and which can never be produced through human effort.

The Baptism of Fire (real, dry, common)

> As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (Matt 3:11–12).

The baptism of fire is identification with judgment. This is a reference to the wrath of God upon all unbelievers at the Second Coming of Christ (Matt 3:11, 12; 25:31–46; 2 Thess 1:7–9) when God in His wrath consumes the unbelievers (Isa 63:1–6; Ezek 20:34–38).

Miscellaneous Baptisms in the Bible

There are places in the Bible where the word "baptism" is used in a special way apart from the seven uses presented above.

Baptism as a Title: Baptism as a title is used in reference to "John the Baptist" where John comes as the "identifier" of Christ. John's primary purpose in coming into the world was not to place people into water for repentance, but rather to identify the coming Messiah. This is not an attempt to make light of John's baptism, but simply to point out what his primary purpose was. The title "John the Baptist" is not used primarily in connection with his ritual water identifications, but rather as "the identifier" of Christ. John did indeed identify Christ when He came to him. Thus the passages where "Baptist" as used in the Bible always refers to a title as a herald (Matthew 3:1–2; 11:11–12; 14:1–2, 8; 16:13–14; 17:11–13; Mark 6:25; 8:28; Luke 7:20, 23; 19:19).

Ceremonial Baptisms: There are places in the Bible where the word "baptism" occurs and its use is most likely in reference to a ceremonial washing (Mark 7:3–4; Luke 11:38; Heb 6:1–2; 9:9–10).

Baptism meaning "to dip": Finally, there are places where the word "baptism" occurs where one thing is literally placed into another thing (Luke 16:24; John 13:26–27; Rev 19:13).

CONFUSED PASSAGES ON BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

There are many today who teach that water baptism is essential for salvation. There are six popular passages argued by baptismal regenerationists.

John 3:3–8

> Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he

> cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:3–8)

The strength of the position that water baptism is meant in John 3:5 primarily rests upon the assumption that the mention of water refers to water baptism. This assumption is gratuitous. Contextually this does not fit. There are several views of the meaning of "being born of water and the spirit but are beyond the scope of this paper.[25]

It should be noted that Jesus criticized Nicodemus for not understanding these things (John 3:10). This in itself is an indication that what Jesus taught about the source of regeneration could be known from the Old Testament.

Water was often used metaphorically in the Old Testament to symbolize spiritual cleansing (Num 19:17–19; Isa 55:1–3; cf. Ps 51:10; Jer 2:13; 17:13; Zech 14:8). God promised that He would pour out His spirit on people as water (Isa 32:15–16; Joel 2:28–29). The fact that God would bring cleansing by His Spirit was clearly presented in the Old Testament. Unless a person has been spiritually cleansed by God's Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom. This is what Jesus meant by being born from above or again (See also 1 Cor 6:11). Also, Jesus never specified water baptism in His conversation with Nicodemus. It should be concluded that this passage does not have water baptism in view.

This cleansing is specifically mentioned in Ezekiel 36:25–27:

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[25] For a clear refutation of this view and a treatment of the various options possible, consult James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 243–8; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 215–9; and Zane C. Hodges, "Water and Spirit–John 3:5," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135, no. 539 (July 1978): 206–20.

> Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

Titus 3:5

> not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

In this passage the word translated "washing" does not mean baptism. There is no ritual reference here. This is not a command to be baptized, or even an example of baptismal regeneration. The word means "to bathe" or "to wash." This refers to a cleansing by the Holy Spirit in "washing" us metaphorically and making us clean with regard to sin. This is a ministry of the Holy Spirit and not a ritual.

Mark 16:16

> He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned (Mark 16:16).

Those who believe in baptismal regeneration often quote this passage. This verse is suspect for several reasons. The second half of the verse clearly condemns a person on the basis of unbelief and not a failure to be baptized. The issue of salvation is faith and not baptism. Jesus did not say, "He who *is not baptized* will be condemned." Nor did He say, "He who *does not believe and is not baptized* will be condemned."

Rather, He said, "He who *does not believe* will be condemned," making it clear that faith alone was necessary for salvation.

Acts 2:38

> Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

This verse has perplexed Bible students greatly and there are numerous interpretations. This author is firmly convinced that salvation is by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, and that no work of man is required for salvation (See Eph 2:8–9; Rom 4:5–6). Therefore, any interpretation of this verse which makes ritual baptism in water a requisite for salvation is to be rejected.

Lanny Tanton has classified the major approaches to this passage as "the Sacramentarian," "the causal *eis* interpretation," "the syntactical break interpretation," "the conversion-initiation interpretation," "the ultra-dispensation interpretation," and "transitional interpretation."[26] He discusses the pros and cons of each position and concludes that the transitional interpretation best fits both the grammatical and theological requirements for an accurate understanding.

This "transitional interpretation" holds that those who heard Peter's message in Acts 2 and believed it were regenerated at the moment of their faith, whether that occurred before or after their repentance. However, in order to receive the forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit, Peter's audience had to repent and be baptized. This condition is applied in Acts only to Palestinians exposed to the baptizing ministry of John and of Jesus. It is not applicable to

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[26] Faithalone.org., The Gospel and Water Baptism: A Study of Acts 2:38; March 1, 1990 by GES Webmaster in Journal Articles.

Gentiles at all as the case of Cornelius's conversion shows. Cornelius received the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit at the moment of faith, along with regeneration and justification.[27]

In 1 Corinthians 1:17, the apostle Paul stated clearly that water baptism is not part of the gospel message. *"For Christ did not send me to **baptize**, but to preach the gospel."* The gospel saves, water baptism does not! Paul's words in this passage refute the idea of baptismal regeneration.

1 Peter 3:18–22

> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the divine long-suffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us-- baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him (1 Pet 3:18–22).

This is the only passage in the New Testament where the words "save" and "baptism" appear in close proximity. The only baptism that "saves" is the baptism of the Spirit in which the believer is placed into union with Christ the moment he believes.

He makes it evident that this is not water baptism by saying "not the removal of the filth of the flesh." Just as Noah's position in the ark saved him from the waters of judgment, so the believer's position in

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[27] Ibid.

Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit saves him from eternal judgment.

Acts 22:12–16

> Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, came to me; and he stood and said to me, "Brother Saul, receive your sight." And at that same hour I looked up at him. Then he said, "The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:12–16).

This is a reference to Paul's baptism after his salvation experience as recorded in Acts 9. His baptism is like that of every church age believer, an act of obedience subsequent to salvation. The fact that Ananias called Paul "brother" indicates that Paul was already saved before his baptism. Paul was saved and his sins were washed away when he called on the Lord, not when he was baptized in water.

WHY THE CHURCH AGE BELIEVER SHOULD BE BAPTIZED:

1. Jesus Christ commanded believer's water baptism as part of the great commission in Matthew 28:19.

> Go therefore and make disciples [imperative] of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy

Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matt 28:19–20).

2. There are numerous accounts of believers engaging in ritual water baptism throughout the New Testament (Acts 2:41; 8:12–13, 38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5), and clear commands to be baptized (Acts 2:38, 10:48, 22:16).
3. Paul himself was baptized and he administered water baptism to others (Acts 9:18; 16:31–33; 19:1–7; 1 Cor 1:15).

Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name (Acts 22:16).

4. The New Testament sets forth believer's ritual water baptism as a means of teaching retroactive positional identification with Christ (Rom 6:1–2; Gal 3:27–28). As a teaching tool, baptism teaches positional sanctification.

When a believer SHOULD be baptized:

1. When a person knows that he or she has salvation through Jesus Christ and desires to make a public profession of it.
2. When a person has sufficient understanding of baptism's symbolic significance.
3. If a believer has been saved for many years without having undergone ritual baptism and has come to understand the significance of it, then water baptism would allow one to experience what so many other believers have experienced, namely, obedience to Christ's command in Matthew 28:19.

It is my observance that believer's baptism is a command to each member of the body of Christ. When and where that baptism should

take place is between each believer and God. However, there is not one instance in the New Testament of any believer waiting long to be baptized after one is either given the command, or after receiving salvation.

When the believer SHOULD NOT be baptized:

1. A person who thinks water baptism is necessary for salvation should NOT be baptized.
2. A believer who thinks there is any spiritual benefit to water baptism should NOT be baptized.
3. A believer who thinks water baptism can be performed by proxy should NOT be baptized.
4. A believer who thinks water baptism is what is necessary to bring one into the body of Christ should NOT be baptized.

Why baptism moved beyond the first century church and should still be practiced today:

1. The water baptism of the believer is commanded to be practiced in the church age without reference to any time when it will cease.
2. The reference to Ephesians 4:5 where there is a reference to only "one baptism" is a reference to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is something common to all believers.
3. Some are inclined to say that baptism was phased out by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1: 17 where Paul states that he had only baptized a few Christians. And yet he went on to baptize others after his stay at Corinth (Acts 19:1–5). That Paul baptized any at all is significant in that it tells us that he recognized its proper use in the church.

SALVATION IS BY GRACE ALONE, THROUGH FAITH ALONE, IN CHRIST ALONE

God offers eternal life to the person who responds favourably to the gospel. The gospel is the good news that God has provided salvation through the work of Jesus Christ. God has to do the saving, because all mankind is spiritually dead as a result of sin.

The question "how can a man be just with God?" is of major importance. Often humanity sees God as possessing only the attribute of love, and subsequently asks "how can a loving God send any to the lake of fire?" The Bible declares that God is love (1 John 4:7–12); however, the Bible also states that God is righteous and just (Ps 9:7–8; 119:137; Rom 10:3–4). Therefore, God can have nothing whatsoever to do with sin, except to condemn it.

The real question is "how can a righteous and just God allow any sinner into heaven?" God can allow a person into heaven because His love found a way to satisfy His righteousness and justice without compromising His character, and this act of love can be observed in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Peter tells us good news when he states that "Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (1 Pet 3:18). This is the greatest substitution in history; the "just for the unjust." Christ took all humanity's sins upon Himself, so they might be able to receive His righteousness. Paul makes this truth clear when writing to the church at Corinth: "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor 5:21).

God the Father placed the sins of all mankind (including Adam's original sin) on Jesus Christ while He was on the cross and judged Him as if the sinner was there paying the penalty of his own sin.

Furthermore, God the Father gives His righteousness to the sinner who comes by faith alone to Christ alone (Rom 3:22, 5:17; Philippians 3:9). God will declare the believer righteous the moment he trusts in Jesus for salvation. Keep in mind that all human sin was imputed to Jesus, and that just as such an imputation did not make Him a sinner in conduct, so the imputation of God's righteousness to the believer does not make him righteous in all his behavior, it only declares him to be righteous before God.

The Bible declares that "by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph 2:8–9). Paul explained clearly that salvation is "through faith." Faith does not save, Jesus saves; faith is merely the means by which a believer receives salvation.

9

The Free Grace Faux Pas: Justification by Grace Followed by Sanctification by Works?

Dennis Rokser

It is my conviction that faithful Bible expositors deeply desire to accurately handle the teaching of the word of God to be an approved worker that is not ashamed at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Tim 2:15). Because of this, I would like to devote my paper and session to a great concern I have due to my observations over the years in Free Grace circles of the need to accurately and scripturally communicate the teaching of Christian living by grace or practical/progressive sanctification.

During the 1980s in the USA, there was a theological battle waged (which still continues today) regarding the most important issue of all – the gospel of salvation. While all agreed that eternal salvation is by grace alone (Sola Gratia) through faith alone (Sola Fide) in Christ alone (Solus Christus) as the Reformation espoused, there was a serious and significant redefining of these biblical terms. The false teaching of Lordship Salvation redefined "faith" to involve such conditions as repentance (turning) from sin, total surrender with commitment of obedience to the Lordship/mastery of Jesus Christ over your life, evidenced by ongoing fruitfulness and faithful perseverance for the rest of your life, or the so-called "Christian" was

never genuinely saved or elected by God. Such notable authors and teachers as John MacArthur Jr., John Piper, R.C. Sproul, and many others, especially of strong Calvinistic persuasion, championed this view of Lordship Salvation which was embraced by many in evangelical circles and deeply impacted many seminaries, churches, and so forth. MacArthur's landmark book, *The Gospel According*[1] *to Jesus*, especially seemed to set off this doctrinal controversy and firestorm afresh, and rightly so in my opinion, as this book (and his many other books to follow) presented a false and divergent view of the gospel of grace based upon faulty exegesis and forced eisegesis of various scriptural texts. In doctrinal response and contrast to LS, there were several notable Free Grace Bible teachers and authors that opposed the LS view with such books as:

- *So Great Salvation*[2] by Charles Ryrie
- *Absolutely Free*[3] by Zane Hodges
- *Lordship Salvation*[4] by Charles Bing
- *Sin, the Savior, and Salvation*[5] by Robert Lightner

As if anticipating this critical issue years ago and battling similar issues in their day, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer and the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary developed the following clarity in their DTS Doctrinal Statement, which at least on paper (though not always in classrooms) remains intact yet today.

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[1] John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus: What Does Jesus Mean When He Says "Follow Me"?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988).
[2] Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989).
[3] Zane Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Dallas and Grand Rapids: Redención Viva and Zondervan Publishing House, 1989).
[4] The book, *Lordship Salvation: A Biblical Evaluation and Response* was originally presented as a Ph.D. dissertation at Dallas Theological Seminary. It has since been updated, printed, and published and is currently available to purchase or read online at www.lordshipsalvation.org (accessed April 8, 2021).
[5] Robert P. Lightner, *Sin, the Savior, and Salvation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991).

> Article VII—Salvation Only Through Christ
>
> We believe, also, that our redemption has been accomplished solely by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was made to be sin and was made a curse for us, dying in our room and stead; and that no repentance, no feeling, no faith, no good resolutions, no sincere efforts, no submission to the rules and regulations of any church, nor all the churches that have existed since the days of the Apostles can add in the very least degree to the value of the blood, or to the merit of the finished work wrought for us by Him who united in His person true and proper deity with perfect and sinless humanity (Lev. 17:11; Isa. 64:6; Matt. 26:28; John 3:7–18; Rom. 5:6–9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; 6:15; Eph. 1:7; Phil. 3:4–9; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:18–19, 23).
>
> We believe that the new birth of the believer comes only through faith in Christ and that repentance is a vital part of believing, and is in no way, in itself, a separate and independent condition of salvation; nor are any other acts, such as confession, baptism, prayer, or faithful service, to be added to believing as a condition of salvation (John 1:12; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:29; Acts 13:39; 16:31; Rom. 1:16–17; 3:22, 26; 4:5; 10:4; Gal. 3:22).[6]

I believe that most in Free Grace circles would declare a hearty "amen" to these DTS doctrinal declarations on the clarity of the gospel by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and His finished work alone (1 Cor 15:1–4). However, while we would reject LS teaching or any works-based gospel message for one's *justification* before God, could it be that we are inadvertently teaching a works-based *sanctification* to believers in Christ? If the only response consistent with God's grace is faith alone in Christ alone, since both grace and faith are non-meritorious (Eph 2:8; Rom 4:4–5, 11:6), could it be

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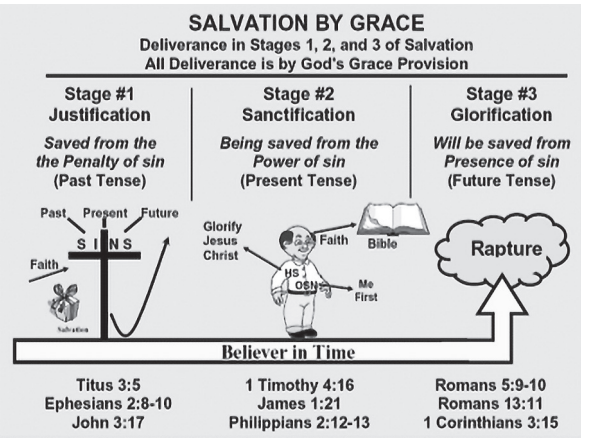
[6] The doctrinal statement of Dallas Theological Society is available online at https://www.dts.edu/about/what-we-believe/doctrinal-statement/ (accessed April 8, 2021).

that we are making a significant mistake or *faux pas* when it comes to our teaching of practical and progressive sanctification as it relates the second tense or phase (salvation from sin's power) in the three tenses/phases of God's plan of salvation?



Is sanctification by grace or is it by works? For it cannot be both. Could it be that while discerning the doctrinal errors of LS which imposes "works" as a condition for justification (though calling it "grace"), that we in FG circles may be duplicating these same errors regarding the teaching of practical sanctification? Could it also be that while we are seeking to avoid the ditch of *license* (Romans 6) in our teaching of grace, that we are accidentally backing into the ditch of *legalism* (Romans 7) and do not even recognize it? I fear that too often this may be the case. Over the years I have heard Free Grace Bible teachers state the following regarding sanctification and the Christian life:

- While justification is by grace through faith alone, sanctification is by faith plus works.
- As believers in Jesus Christ, we must do our best for Jesus if we are going to receive a reward.

- The key to the Spirit-filled life is the confession of our sins (1 John 1:9).
- Believers, you just need to wake up and get to work.
- Obedience is the key to true spirituality.
- If you are going to spiritually grow, you need to faithfully perform the spiritual disciplines.
- Witnessing, reading your Bible, and prayer is what makes you a truly spiritual Christian.
- When it comes to the Christian life, you need to do your best and then trust God to do the rest.
- While justification is God's work, sanctification is man's work.
- Your faithfulness and good works for Jesus Christ now, will determine whether you receive a reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ or punitive damages involving outer darkness with wailing and gnashing of teeth.
- Believers should also be motivated by the knowledge that their heavenly Father both blesses obedience and disciplines disobedience in His children (Heb 12:3–11; Lev 26:1–45).

If these statements do not bother you or raise alarm, you are probably guilty of what one Bible teacher calls a "grace disconnect." Of course, we believe the Bible teaches there is a place in the Christian life for obedience, good works, witnessing, reading your Bible, prayer, faithfulness, confession of sins, future rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and other things. Ephesians 2:8–9 makes it abundantly clear that while good works can never save a lost sinner as only God's grace through faith can accomplish this, however, regarding good works, God has designed that believers "should walk in them" (2:10). Yet how these activities are approached and produced are of the utmost importance under grace. How can we state that the Christian life is all by grace and then not conclude that it can only be lived by faith in Jesus Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit and not by our works or self-effort as too many in FG circles espouse?

Consider the following verses regarding the Christian life related to living by faith in practical sanctification:

> I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me & gave himself for me (Gal 2:20).
>
> Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:1–2a).
>
> And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him (Heb 11:6).
>
> For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love (Gal 5:5–6).

Over one hundred years ago, Dr. C. I. Scofield estimated that ninety percent of believers in Christ did not understand *how* to live the Christian life by grace. In 1953, Norman B. Harrison concurred when he wrote,

> There is a constant emphasis on externals in current Christian thinking. This directly fosters the greatest error in Christendom: Behaviorism. The popular conception of the Christian life is that it consists of conduct: behave yourself in a certain way; do this, don't do that. It's a subtle error: show yourself a good Christian by behaving as one. The net result is that churches are substituting activity and programs for the real life, and we are busy rearing a generation of superficial, surface Christians.[7]

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[7] Norman B. Harrison, *New Testament Living* (n.p.: Harrison Service, Inc., 1953), 5.

> We cannot overestimate the importance of these truths when perhaps 90% of Christians neither recognize or realize the In-living Christ. Nor can we be charged with slighting life's outwardness in Christian conduct; genuine New Testament inwardness insures its outwardness of expression.[8]

Do you think that the percentages are better among believers today? Just like LS proponents desire that believers are faithful and fruitful and do not persist in carnality (though LS robs them of the absolute assurance of salvation if they do), we in FG circles also desire for believers to live godly lives to the glory of God. But "how" is this accomplished? Are we teaching a Romans 7 "try harder to be obedient" approach to sanctification or a Romans 6 and 8 grace approach of walking by faith in view of one's position in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit? Remember what Paul wrote regarding all three phases of salvation in Titus 2:11–14:

> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for *all people*, (with that same grace then) training *us* (as believers) to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and (by that grace) to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

This passage emphasizes what God's grace can do, yea, must do, in all three tenses of salvation resulting in a people "zealous for good works." Furthermore, Colossians 2:6–7 make it abundantly clear that a believer is to *walk* from day to day in the same manner that he

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[8] Harrison, *New Testament Living*, 6.

received Jesus Christ – by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone as supreme and sufficient apart from works, law, and rituals.

> Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving (Col 2:6–7).[9]
>
> How did one *receive* Jesus Christ to become a child of God?
>
> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12).[10]

The word "walk" in Him is the very first command in the book of Colossians and it underscores for us the *how* of the Christian life, and the means of fulfilling all the instructions that follow in this epistle. Imagine someone asking you *how* to receive Jesus Christ to be saved, and you answer …

- "Do your best for Jesus." Is that how you received Jesus Christ?
- "Confess your sins." Is that what Acts 16:31 states?
- "Wake up and get to work." What a contrast to Ephesians 2:8–9!
- "Obedience is the key." Consider John 3:16.
- "Practice the spiritual disciplines." Romans 4:4–5 destroys that form of legalism.

You would be appalled to hear this for the *how* of justification, as you should be appalled regarding the *how* of sanctification. Aren't these wrong answers putting the cart before the horse regarding spiritual fruitfulness and good works? Did not our Lord make it clear to His disciples in the Upper Room Discourse when He emphatically declared:

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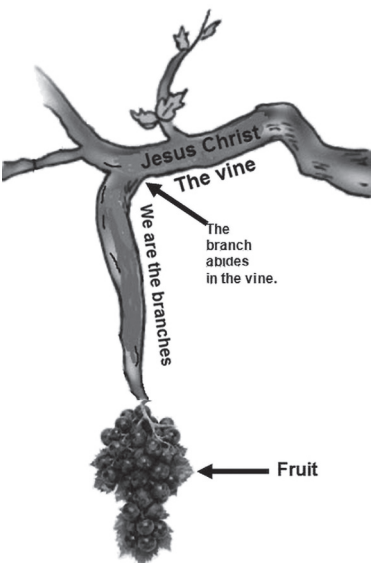
[9] Emphasis added.
[10] Emphasis added.

> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:4–5).

Do we believe what our Lord declared that "apart from Me, you can do nothing" by way of fruit bearing in the Christian life? It is a wonderful day and an "a ha" moment when we realize that God never asked us to produce fruit, but to bear it. We are no more capable of producing spiritual fruit than is a branch in a vineyard disconnected from the vine. Only as we abide like a branch in active dependence upon the Vine (the Lord Jesus Christ) does the life of the Vine (the Holy Spirit) flow through the branch so as to produce this spiritual fruit to the glory of God. And for God to be glorified, He must accomplish it for, in, or through us – His human instruments, branches, or servants.

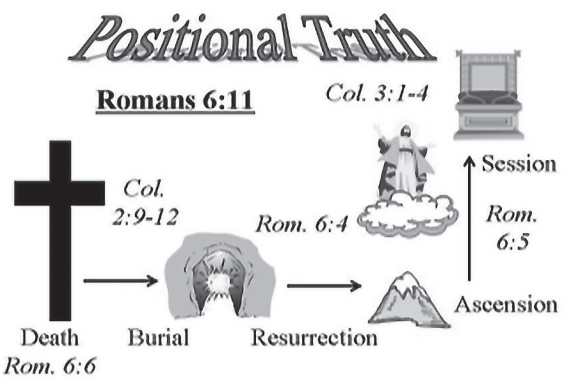


It is interesting to observe in Romans that Paul is passionate about preaching the gospel (Rom 1:14–17) and immediately establishes the *context* of the gospel – a sinner's guilt before a holy God (1:18–3:20). He then explains the *content* and *condition* of the gospel and that justification before God is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ and His work alone apart from works, law, and ritual (Rom 3:21–4:25). He next underscores the believer's spiritual blessings and eternal security by God's grace and power, not his own faithfulness or holy living (Rom 5:1–11). These foundational truths are essential for proper spiritual growth. After setting the stage for identification truth by comparing/contrasting Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12–21, Paul cuts off the anticipated accusation of antinomianism or a license to sin (6:1) as the believer has died to sin in Christ (6:2–4) to give us liberty to now "walk in newness of life" (6:4), never to live in sin. Only after that important plank in this doctrinal foundation is well laid (6:1–10) do we find the first imperative relative to the believer's practical sanctification in Romans 6:11.

So, you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

"Consider" (*logizomai*) is an accounting term used of arriving at a logical conclusion based upon calculating the facts. To fulfill this imperative, believers must know and choose (active voice) to simply "reckon" by faith what God states is already true of them "in Christ Jesus." Paul has already established that every believer has died to sin nature's bondage and is now free and alive to God due to their position in Christ (6:1–5).

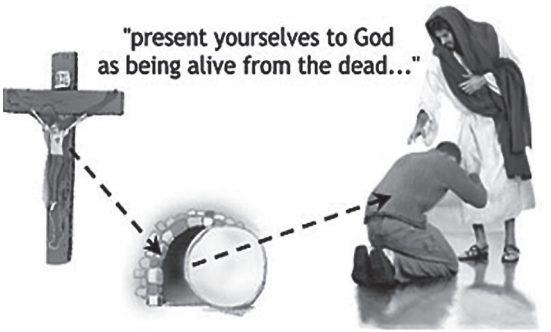
Believers in Christ also have been separated from sin nature's past ruling over their lives because of their union with Jesus Christ and are now freed as new creations in Christ (6:6–7). These are the biblical facts, whether one believes them or not, yet God assumes or wants every believer to "know" (6:3, 6, 10) or "believe" them (6:8).



Yet like the gospel of grace, these great truths are of no personal value until they are personally known and believed. Thus, the fitting imperative to exercise a logical faith ("consider" in 6:11) regarding the believer's positional freedom in Christ follows these indicatives (6:1–10). Appropriately, this command sets the stage for three other logical imperatives in living the Christian life based upon Romans 6:11, namely:

> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace (Rom 6:12–14).

While the Christian still retains a sin nature that desires to reign as a king practically in life (6:12), one now has a daily choice to either yield/present oneself to the Lord or to the sin nature with significant consequences that result (6:12–13). This is not a one-shot dedication but is to be a moment by moment decision to yield to the Lord in the walk of faith.



It is interesting and important to note the progression of thought in Romans 6 and the place of practical obedience:

1. Know/believe the facts of your identification in Christ (6:3, 6, 8, 10).
2. Reckon by faith these facts to be true (6:11).
3. Present/yield yourself to the Lord to serve or obey Him (6:12,13).
4. Obedience will be the result of knowing, reckoning, and presenting (6:12, 16).

The simple truth being taught here is that because of our freedom in Christ positionally, we are practical slaves/servants conditionally to whom we choose to yield/present ourselves to serve each day––either Jesus Christ or the sin nature. What a great and encouraging discovery this is as the Christian life is relational, not mechanical or mystical.

However, the weakness of even the regenerated person to live the Christian life was realized by the apostle Paul in Romans 7 when he sought to do God's will (due to a new nature) through sheer willpower and his own strength but miserably failed.

> For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in

> me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out (Rom 7:15–18).

What will the believer experience when he seeks to live the Christian life by a legalistic mindset of focusing on self, obedience, and performance, seeking victory and fruit through his own strength? It will be Romans 7 failure and frustration!

> "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (7:24).

Can you relate? While knowing the truth of Romans 6, and desiring to serve Jesus Christ, how did Paul end up in Romans 7? He defaulted into self-dependence, instead of yielded dependence upon the Lord! While he knew doctrinally that he had died to the Law (7:4) and was released from it (7:6), yet practically he was approaching the Christian life legalistically. In doing so, he focused on himself and his performance instead of on Jesus Christ as his resource for everything. He began living by law instead of by grace through faith in Christ. He relied on his sufficiency instead of the sufficiency of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Christian life is lived, God's way, by active dependence upon Jesus Christ through faith resting in the grace provisions of God. God the Holy Spirit is the power source of the Christian life––not you or me! This is why the Holy Spirit is mentioned only one time in Romans 7 in explaining powerless sanctification, though twenty-one times in Romans 8 in emphasizing powerful sanctification. Years ago, Harry Ironside penned,

> In Romans Seven Paul is describing the inevitable conflict that every believer knows when he undertakes to lead a holy life on the principle of legality. He feels instinctively that the law is spiritual, but that he himself, for some unexplained reason, is fleshly, carnal, and in bondage

to sin. This discovery is one of the most heart-breaking a Christian ever made. Yet each one must and does make it for himself at some time in his pilgrimage.

The believer finds himself doing things he knows to be wrong, and which his inmost desires are opposed to; while what he yearns to do he fails to accomplish, and does, instead, what he hates. But this is the first part of a great lesson which all must learn who would matriculate (enroll) in God's school. It is the lesson of no confidence in "the flesh"; and until it is learned there can be no true progress in growth. The incorrigibility of the flesh must be realized before one is ready to turn altogether from self to Christ for sanctification, as he has already done for justification.[11]

The man in Romans Seven is occupied with himself, and his disappointment and anguish spring from his inability to find in self the good which he loves. The man of Romans Eight has learned there is no good to be found in self. It is only in Christ; and his song of triumph results from the joy of having found out that he is "complete in Him."[12]

In answer to Paul's cry of despair in Romans 7:24 comes verse 25: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? **Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!** So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin."[13]

Focused once again on Jesus Christ and not himself, Paul declares:

> There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ

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[11] Quoted by Miles Stanford in "Legal Conflict" in *None but the Hungry Heart* (n.p.: Living Springs Press, 1968), 2.16.
[12] Quoted by Miles Stanford in "Powerless Recipients" in *None but the Hungry Heart* (n.p.: Living Springs Press, 1969), 1.9.
[13] Emphasis added.

> Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom 8:1–4).

In his classic commentary on Romans, William R. Newell aptly writes,

> When we begin to comprehend Romans Six, we know that our death in Christ unto sin was completed at Calvary. When we have been in Romans Seven for a time, we come to realize that we have been struggling to produce that which God has already accomplished for us in Christ. When we thereby come to Romans Eight, we know at last that the Holy Spirit will produce in our experience what God completed for us on the Cross and in Christ our life. In Romans Six we see the foundation of our deliverance—the fact that we died with Christ; and also, the conditions of our deliverance—that we reckon ourselves dead unto sin and yield to God as those that are alive from the dead. Romans Eight tells us the means and the method of our deliverance-that it is through the blessed Holy Spirit alone that we are actually delivered in everyday life, from sin's reign; the moment we cease from all our own efforts and let Him do all the work, He will begin delivering us from the power of sin. How long it takes some of us to come to the end of our own efforts can be seen in Romans Seven![14]

In clarifying a grace approach to Christian living, it is also helpful to observe Paul's use of imperatives in Romans.

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[14] Quoted by Miles Stanford in "Heart of Romans" in *None but the Hungry Heart* (n.p.: Living Springs Press, 1968), 2.6.

- Rom 3:4, 6:11, 6:12, 6:13, 6:19, 7:7, 10:6, 11:9, 11:10, 11:18, 11:20, 11:22
- Rom 12:2, 12:14, 12:16, 12:19, 12:20, 12:21, 13:1, 13:3, 13:4, 13:7, 13:8, 13:9, 13:14, 14:1, 14:3, 14:5, 14:13, 14:15, 14:16, 14:20, 14:22, 15:2, 15:7, 15:10, 15:11, 16:3, 16:5, 16:6, 16:7, 16:8, 16:9, 16:10, 16:11, 16:12, 16:13, 16:14, 16:15, 16:16, 16:17

It is not until Paul has laid a strong grace foundation of what Christ has done, is doing, and will do for, in, and through us by His grace through faith regarding our justification, sanctification, and glorification that he then bundles one imperative application after another starting in Romans 12. Please observe that the hinge verses of moving from grace doctrine to grace application (12:1–2) involves a return to the previous foundation of Romans 6–8.

> I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom 12:1–2).

The important truths of our positional identification with Christ, our powerless sanctification by law or human effort, and powerful sanctification by the Holy Spirit should ever be the paradigm that these practical imperatives are viewed and fulfilled. This is why I am convinced that we would do well to pattern our teaching after this grace approach as Paul did in Romans (1–11; 12–16), Ephesians (1–3; 4–6), Colossians (1–2; 3–4), etc.

If we were to ask those whom we teach, "How exactly do you live the Christian life from day to day? As a believer in Christ, must you obey to be spiritual or be spiritual to obey?" How would they answer? Will your hearers say in essence, "I cannot live the Christian life; it must be by faith in Jesus Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit

in keeping with my new position in Christ"? Or would they answer a series of things that they need to do or not do, of course with God's help. To illustrate this problem and concern once again, listen to the following testimony and see if you can relate?

> On another occasion I was in a Bible class taught by a friend who is a seminary professor. During the one hour class he used the word obedience no fewer than thirty times. Afterwards over coffee I asked him where faith and the Holy Spirit were in his message? He told me what I believe many think to be true: that the congregation understood that our Christian obedience could only be from the power of the Holy Spirit. He did not, however, say that and I know many of the believers who hear about obedience do not know that either. They see their obedience as that which approves them to God apart from grace, apart from the cross, apart from faith, and apart from the Holy Spirit. Although they know they were saved by grace through faith they now think they must live by works of obedience. We have to ask what is communicated when we use the word *obedience* without prefacing it with God's grace, our faith, and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

I will be the first to confess that I am a congenital legalist with a licentious bent due to having a sin nature, along with human viewpoint remaining in my cranium. Thus, grace orientation is foreign to my natural thinking and highlights my need for Romans 12:2. Therefore, I am ever prone to want to help God out by my own wisdom and strength (as if He needed them) when I actually need to depend upon Him as He is fully capable of doing His will for, in, and through me, by His grace, according to His revealed word. Consider the following verses:

> Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will,

working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen (Heb 13:20–21).

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor 3:5–6).

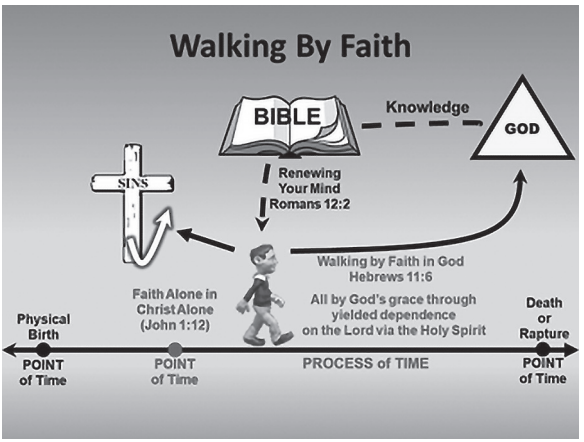
You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim 2:1).

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us (2 Cor 4:7).

This walk of faith I oftentimes call the "faith rest life" is rooted in Hebrews 3 and 4 (the word "rest" or "rested" occurs twelve times in these chapters). Just like when I rested by faith in the finished work of Christ for my justification before God, so I am to rest by faith in God's person, promises, and provisions of grace in my daily walk and sanctification (Heb 4:1–10). This, however, will require "diligence" (Heb 4:11––NKJV) in repeated choices to trust the Lord and not the arm of flesh (Jer 17:5–8). What a peace, joy, hope, and inner strength comes from faith resting in the Lord:

- to fight my spiritual battles (2 Chr 15, 17)
- to carry my burdens (1 Pet 5:7)
- to address my fears (Isa 41:10)
- to direct my path (Prov 3:5–6)
- to strengthen my service (Col 1:29)
- to have victory over sin (Rom 6:11–13)
- to build my marriage (Ps 127:1)
- etc.

Thus, Paul, in his prayer wish for the Roman believers, concludes with: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Rom 15:13).



Romans 15:13 is the Christian life in a nutshell based on grace doctrine. But keep in mind that the *value* of your faith (whether reliable or not) and *size* of your faith lies in the *object* of faith. Because of this, a growing knowledge of our Lord Jesus and the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16) via the word of God is very important. The difference between "little faith" (Matt 6:30) and "great faith" (Matt 8:26) is the size of your God in your mind's eye. It should not therefore surprise us that those who have been born again by God's grace are then instructed to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen" (2 Pet 3:18). The Christian life boils down to *focus* and *faith* (Gal 2:20; Heb 12:2; 2 Pet 3:18). Therefore, a growing knowledge of our Lord Jesus and God's grace is crucial for inner spiritual transformation and not mere external legal conformity (2 Cor 3:18). This is also why a dispensational understanding of the word of God is critical lest we mix Israel's Law, earthly physical promises and blessings, and the "obey and you will be blessed" approach with the teachings of grace (Rom 6:14) for the church (Eph 3) and its spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph 1:3). Once again, permit me to quote W. R. Newell when he writes:

The Proper Attitude of Man Under Grace:

To believe, and to consent to be *loved while unworthy, is* the great secret.

To refuse to make "resolutions" and "vows"; for that is to trust in the flesh.

To expect to be blessed, though realizing more and more lack of worth…

To rely on God's chastening [child training] hand as a mark of His kindness…

Things Which Gracious Souls Discover:

To "hope to be better" [hence acceptable] is to fail to see yourself *in Christ only.*

To be *disappointed* with yourself, is to have *believed* in yourself. To be *discouraged is unbelief,* —as to God's purpose and plan of blessing for you.

To be proud, is to be *blind!* For we have no standing before God, *in ourselves.*

The lack of Divine blessing, therefore, comes from unbelief, and not from *failure of devotion...*

To preach devotion first, and blessing second, is to reverse God's order, and preach *law, not grace.*

The Law made man's blessing depend on devotion; Grace *confers undeserved, unconditional* blessing: our devotion may follow, but does not always do so, — in proper measure.[15]

Over the years, I have sought to crystalize in writing the essence of Christian living by grace. While the following definition of the

[15] W. R. Newell.

Christian life is incomplete in certain details, I have sought to capture its essence by writing,

> The authentic Christian life is designed to be a daily, personal, vertical, fellowship with God based on our identification with Jesus Christ, motivated primarily by His love, and provided totally by His grace and power, which is enjoyed through repeated responses of faith as one diligently seeks the Lord, resulting in spiritual growth and Christ-likeness, faithful obedience to God's will, and fruitful service to others in love all to the glory of God.

Permit me to point out several aspects of this composite description. Observe that *the authentic Christian life:*

1. is designed to be a daily personal vertical fellowship with God (1 John 1:3–10). It's not mechanical. It's not mystical. It's relational (John 17:3; Phil 3:10).
2. is based on your identification with Jesus Christ: co-crucified, co-buried and co-risen with Him (Romans 6:1–10).
3. is motivated primarily by His love, not by law (2 Cor 5:14–15).
4. is provided totally by His grace (1 Cor 15:10; 2 Tim 2:1) and power (Rom 8:1–4) as we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3) and are complete in Christ (Col 2:10).
5. is enjoyed through repeated responses of faith as one diligently seeks the Lord (Heb 4:9–11; 11:6).
6. results in spiritual growth into Christ's likeness (1 Pet 2:2; 2 Cor 3:18).
7. results in faithful obedience to God's will (Rom 6:16; 12:2).
8. results in fruitful service to others in love (Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 4:10).
9. is ultimately all to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:32; 1 Pet 5:11).

Like the G-R-A-C-E acrostic, grace reminds us of **G**od's **R**iches/**R**esources **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense apart from works, law, and ritual. And this is where a free grace *faux pas* too often occurs. The

thesaurus says a *faux pas* is "an error, a blooper, a bungle, a boo boo, a lapse, a slip." Let me illustrate this *faux pas* once again.

> The condition for our justification is faith alone in Christ, but there are many conditions for sanctification. If we confuse the two then we wrongly conclude that the *conditions* for sanctification such as obedience, commitment, submission, and good works are conditions for justification. But since we know that justification is by grace through faith, the Bible's commands for obedience, commitment, submission and good works are *conditions* only for our sanctification. If these were conditions for our justification, then salvation would be by works instead of faith.

This free grace proponent commits the same error in second tense salvation that the LS does in first tense. They put all these conditions upon it instead of it being by God's grace through simple faith in Jesus Christ and His sufficiency. It is critical to note that they confuse the means with the results, though at least they relegate these results to sanctification instead of justification, yet this is still a serious *faux pas*.

The inward tendency and religious teaching of legalism always stands as a challenge to the teaching of grace. By legalism I mean the mental attitude which seeks to earn or merit the blessings of God by religious rituals or good works for either justification or sanctification. We observe in Galatians Paul's hard-hitting anathema of adding even one work to the message of grace (1:3–11) and how the Law cannot justify the sinner, nor sanctify the saint through obedience and self-effort. Therefore, Paul makes it crystal clear *how* a sinner is *justified*: "[Y]et we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified" (Gal 2:16).

How does the believer then live the Christian life in *sanctification*? In the same manner or means as he was justified: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

Why must justification and sanctification be solely by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone based upon the finished work of Jesus Christ? "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose" (Gal 2:21).

What happens when we lose sight of our walk and growth by grace through faith and resort to an obedience, works-based approach to the Christian life? We lose *focus* (Jesus Christ and Calvary) and our object of *faith*.

> O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit (through simply believing the Gospel), are you now being perfected by the flesh (a works-obedience approach to sanctification)? Did you suffer so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain? Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? (Of course, the hearing of faith) (Gal 3:1–5).[16]

Once again, I would state emphatically that the Christian life is lived by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone just as we were justified before God and saved from sin's penalty. Obedience to God's will overflows out of this walk of faith as empowered by the Holy Spirit instead of cranking it out by the flesh. This applies

[16] Comments added.

also to the confession of sins to be restored to fellowship with God which is a trans-dispensational principle (Prov 28:13; 1 John 1:9). In further discussing our fellowship with God (1:3,6,7), John writes: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:9–10).

When believers are made aware of committing sins in their walk (1:6,7), they are to confess them to God as needed (vs. 9), and not cover them (v. 10). They can then claim His parental forgiveness and cleansing in their walk by exercising faith in His stated promises (v. 9). The purpose of this confession of sin is to again "walk in the light as He is in the light" and "have fellowship with one another" (vs. 7) as verse 7 precedes verse 9. While not throwing out the baby with the bathwater as some have done regarding the confession of sins, I recognize that the key to the Christian life is not the confession of sins but walking by faith in the light of Jesus Christ. I would encourage us to not eliminate, nor overemphasize the use of 1 John 1:9, as some teachers do, since the number of scriptural exhortations to confess our sins pales in comparison and emphasis to living by faith in the sanctification process.

In closing, I leave you with an adage that is worth remembering: "I try, I fail; I trust, He succeeds." Amen?

10
Biblical Discipleship: Sanctification in Practice[1]

Daniel Goepfrich

One of the great confusions among Evangelicals today is the place of discipleship in the salvation process. The greatest damage is done by those who tie discipleship too closely to salvation itself. Among conservative Christians, this is best seen in doctrines like Calvinism and Lordship Salvation. While these teachings insist that salvation stands on its own and is not dependent on maturity or good works, their own proponents betray them. Upon seeing a "professed believer" living in sin or not showing enough maturity, the Calvinist or Lordship Salvationist does not question the person's maturity or dedication; rather, they question the person's salvation. They doubt that a person can truly be saved and still live in sin or be immature with no fruit to show for their conversion. Thus, many genuine believers continue to question their salvation rather than their discipleship, or they give up on their faith altogether since they simply cannot "get it right."

The only way to fix this problem is to return to a biblical understanding of salvation and discipleship. While this paper will

[1] Much of this paper is adapted from the author's book, *Biblical Discipleship: The Path for Helping People Follow Jesus* (Exegetica Publishing, 2020), and the article, "The Importance of Discipleship" (Ariel Magazine, Winter 2020, 1:37).

primarily address the discipleship aspect, it is important to clarify the pure gospel first.

THE PURE GOSPEL

The apostle Paul began his theological treatise on the human condition with a bold claim: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16). In this statement, we find at least three keys. First, the gospel is something that leads some people to shame. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because of its power, but some are ashamed. One major reason in today's world may be that the gospel presupposes the doctrine of sin. Just a few chapters later Paul stated, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). This is not something that many want to discuss or even admit. We would much rather believe that we are good, not sinful beings in need of salvation, yet Paul knew that this type of thinking is disastrous because, in God's economy, sin demands death. "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23). Paul was not ashamed to present sin as a key component of his gospel message because, without sin, salvation is not needed. The promise of grace is empty if there is no threat of judgment. "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died **for our sins**[2] in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3). The gospel is not that Christ died; everyone dies. It is not even that Christ died for us. The gospel insists that we are sinners and that is the reason he had to die.

Second, the gospel is God's power to save. Peter declared that salvation can be found in Jesus alone, "for there is no other name

[2] Emphasis added.

under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). As he said this, he was almost certainly reflecting on Jesus' own words: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). In his infinite wisdom, God has chosen to tie his power to save to one thing: the preaching of the gospel. No one can be saved without hearing and believing the gospel. Even an angel from God cannot offer another way (Gal 1:8). "How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? … So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:14, 17).

Third, the gospel message of Jesus' death for sin and his resurrection to life is the only gospel that saves, but each person must accept and believe it in its entirety. "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3–4). According to Paul, there are two things a person must believe: who Jesus is and what Jesus did. To believe in Jesus as Lord or Christ is to embrace the truth that he is the one sent from God to rescue humanity, that he is the only one who can do it, and that he accomplished it through his death and resurrection – nothing more, nothing less. It means to appropriate for yourself, personally and individually, the gift that God offers to everyone. When asked specifically, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul's response could not have been clearer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). This was not true only for the man who asked but also for his entire household. Anyone who believes will be saved.

Thus, the pure gospel is the message that each person is a sinner, condemned and in need of salvation. It tells that not only is God the only one who can save but that he has chosen to do so through Jesus' death and resurrection in our place because of our sin. And it promises that if a person genuinely embraces that truth for himself, he will

be made right with God. "By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph 2:8–9).

DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT SALVATION

Notice there is nothing in the gospel that insists on immediate life change, nothing that says that if a person does not live correctly then he is not saved, nothing that says that a person must submit to Christ's mastery (lordship) of his life before salvation is given. Those are all works that people have added to the simple gift of God's grace and stripped it of its power. They have perverted God's gift into something linked to man's obedience. In their desire to not "cheapen" God's grace, they have made it an expensive, works-based salvation, and have appointed themselves the guardians of God's vineyard, those in charge of determining who is truly a believer based solely on their determination of the person's actions.

But are good works not to be evident in a believer's life? Is that not what we were created for (Eph 2:10)? Did Paul not insist that the spiritual life, when lived in step with the Holy Spirit, should produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23)? Are we not called new creations in Christ (2 Cor 5:17)? Yes, all this is true! We do not deny that God's purpose for every believer is to become conformed to the perfect image of Christ himself (Romans 8:29). However, we insist that this is done via the sanctification process which can occur only within a believer and only after their salvation.

Not only can sanctification occur only in a believer, but there is also a stark contrast between the gift of salvation, which is simply believed and accepted, and discipleship-sanctification which requires time, energy, and effort on behalf of the believer.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12).

> Make every effort to supplement your faith (2 Pet 1:5).
>
> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15).

Does salvation require effort? Do we have to work "for" it or only work "on" it once we have it? Is salvation based on how well we present ourselves to God or on the efficacy of Jesus' presentation of himself as the only satisfactory sacrifice? The distinction is clear. Salvation requires none of these things, yet every believer is commanded and encouraged to do them as part of the post-salvation growth process.

SANCTIFICATION REQUIRES DISCIPLESHIP

During the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, Jesus gave His apostles only a few commands that are recorded in Scripture, but Matthew 28:19–20 provides the broad commission that contains the elements of all the others: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

Our commission is not simply to "proclaim the gospel" (Mark 16:15) or "be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). While it certainly includes those things, making disciples goes beyond that. Jesus gave evangelists to His church as an important role in the process (Eph 4:11), but it is not enough to help people be saved. Our commission is to take them beyond their initial salvation, to help them become disciples of Jesus Himself.

Jesus explained how we accomplish this through the use of the two participles that follow His command— "baptizing them" and

"teaching them to observe." A "disciple" is not simply a believer or convert or fan, although he must be all those things. After nearly twenty years of studying and teaching on biblical discipleship, this writer believes that four elements are required to classify someone as a genuine, biblical disciple. These elements can be summed up in this writer's definition of a disciple: a disciple is a person who places himself or herself under the instruction of an expert or master with the goal of becoming like the person they are following.

Notice the four key elements that biblical discipleship requires. First, discipleship is a process that happens to a *person.* While groups and classes can help create environments for discipleship, groups cannot be discipled. Any given group or class may or may not contain biblical disciples, but a "discipleship group" that meets to discuss Scripture, pray, and fellowship, is not discipleship. Discipleship occurs at the individual, personal level.

Second, discipleship requires a *relationship* with someone else. Discipleship cannot happen in a vacuum. It assumes that the disciple has attached himself to someone else to accomplish something that he could not do on his own. In Jesus' commission, this is found in the words "baptizing" and "teaching."

At its most basic level, water baptism has always been a way for a person to publicly identify himself or herself with the specific message or teaching of the group or teacher they are following. For a disciple to be baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" means voluntary submission to and identification with God through the person of Jesus as He revealed Himself and His apostles recorded in Scripture.

Third, discipleship requires an expert *teacher*. Jesus told the eleven that discipleship meant "teaching them…all that I have commanded you." Biblical disciples must understand that their pastors, teachers, and professors are not the experts they are following, and those teachers must understand and regularly acknowledge that

as well. While Jesus certainly gave these leaders as an important gift to His church (Eph 4:11), Jesus Himself is our expert Teacher. He is the great Teacher, the Great Shepherd of His sheep. Yes, He uses both human and non-human (the Holy Spirit) agents to accomplish the necessary teaching (1 Corinthians 2:6-16), but Jesus is the one we are following—no one else. The expert we choose to follow matters. Thus, biblical discipleship is not simply a casual connection to the name of a dead religious leader but a growing understanding of who Jesus is, what He taught, and what He expects from His followers.

Finally, discipleship has a defined *goal* or destination. In the preceding paragraph, a few words are missing from Jesus' command. Not only did He say, "teaching them…all that I have commanded you"; He said, "teaching them **to observe**[3] all that I have commanded." In other words, Jesus expects His followers to grow in their obedience toward Him until they finally become like the Teacher. In theological terms, this is how we become renewed in the image of God. Consider how the apostle Paul used this concept in his teaching.

> Those whom he foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers (Rom 8:29).
>
> [You were taught] to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and **to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God** in true righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:22–24).
>
> Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and **have put on the new self, which is**

[3] Emphasis added.

> **being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator** (Col 3:9–10).[4]

Thus, discipleship is the process by which we become like the Saviour, Who is Himself the exact representation of God (Heb 1:3). It is the process of spiritual growth, sanctification, that we follow to get back to what God designed and desires us to be.

THE DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS

It is essential to understand discipleship as a process rather than a onetime event and to realize that Scripture explains this process in a way that is both clear and practical for every generation. Not surprisingly, the Holy Spirit had the apostles use an analogy that works perfectly across every culture, language, and generation. Anyone can understand it easily because it reflects the everyday life of every person who has ever lived––believers and unbelievers alike. The analogy used by the apostles is the concept of physical growth and maturity because it perfectly mirrors the spiritual maturity process.

> …so that we may **no longer be children**, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes (Eph 4:14).
>
> **When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways** (1 Cor 13:11).
>
> I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, **as infants in Christ** (1 Cor 3:1).

[4] Emphasis added.

> For though **by this time you ought to be teachers**, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food (Heb 5:12).
>
> I write to you, **children**, because you know the Father. I write to you, **fathers**, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, **young men**, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one (1 John 2:13–14).[5]

Paul, John, and the writer of Hebrews all used the stages of physical growth and maturity to illustrate and explain the stages of spiritual growth and maturity. Just as we can often determine a person's stage of physical life, we can often identify their spiritual life stage as well.

From these passages and others, four different life stages become evident: infant, child, young person, parent. Sadly, most believers in Western culture (European, American, etc.) are solidly entrenched in the first two stages.

Infants can be cute and cuddly, but they are also completely self-absorbed; everything revolves around them, regardless of how that affects others. According to Paul, this attitude and the lifestyle that comes from it is a key identifier that helps determine whether a person is a spiritual infant (1 Cor 3:1–3). Spiritual infants have not grown up yet and are still so immature in the Christian faith that their lives can look just like someone who has not been spiritually born––an unbeliever. This means that while they may do the right things sometimes, or maybe even a lot, their priorities and attitudes and worldviews have not changed. Life is still all about them, what they need, what they want to do. They often still live and talk and act and think as they did before salvation. Their family, friends,

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[5] Emphasis added.

neighbors, and co-workers may even be unable to tell they are a Christian if no one tells them. They are saved, but they have little or no growth to show their faith yet. Like physical infants, spiritual infants need time, attention, care, and protection from the outside world which can hurt them badly. Our expectations of what they can or should do must be lowered. Their primary responsibility is to become nourished on the word of God (1 Pet 2:2) and start to gain spiritual strength.

Children tend to be high energy and loud as they continue their exploration of the world. They begin to walk and talk, awkwardly at first, but with increasing proficiency. Much like infants, though, they are still unable to take care of themselves for the first several years. As time goes on, however, they begin to think deeper, communicate more thoughtfully, argue, and push back against discipline. Childhood is a time where rote memory and careful instruction (some would call this indoctrination) is essential because what they learn at this stage will affect and influence the rest of their lives.

Notice that the apostle Paul gave permission to think and act at whatever stage a person is at; he just did not want us to stop there. "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways" (1 Cor 13:11). This is an important point as we deal with both physical and spiritual maturity. It is legitimate to act like infants or children when we are truly infants or children. We should not push ourselves (or others) to grow too quickly. Every teacher knows that pushing a child too hard too fast can cause long-term damage. On the other hand, we should not resign ourselves to stay in infancy or childhood simply because we do not want to put in the hard work of growth. We are to grow as much as we can at each stage, slowly and carefully.

Paul's benchmark for an infant was that we often cannot tell the difference between a spiritual infant (saved but immature) and

someone who is not saved at all. Spiritual children are sometimes similar, but their thinking and actions have begun to develop and mature because they have taken the initial steps of obedience in their faith. Water baptism and church fellowship are important first steps that can mark the transition from infant to child, but to move into childhood requires a complete dedication to Christ.

Young people are nearly fully grown yet still growing. They become more independent yet are often still volatile in their thinking and actions. They can work and carry more responsibility, think more critically, use humor artfully, hurt or help others with their words and actions, and exert tremendous influence. They still need coaching and ongoing education, however, as they embark on their careers and start their families. According to 1 John 2:13–14, one of the characteristics of a spiritual young person is that they have begun to experience spiritual victories, and they exhibit some spiritual strength. To have a victory or conquer something means that we have faced opposition, done battle of some kind, and won. Spiritually, this means that to reach young adulthood, it is necessary to face some spiritual battles and come out victorious.

Parents represent the final stage of both physical and spiritual development. Producing a child does not necessarily make someone a parent. Throughout Western culture we have babies making more babies, but they are not parents by any standard other than biological. On the other hand, we all probably know some great parents who cannot or have chosen not to have children, or they thought they were done raising children but have had to step up and be parents again, often because the baby-makers are not taking responsibility.

Within the concept of spiritual parents, there is naturally a part where we are to make spiritual infants––help people come to know Jesus as Saviour and be born again; however, making babies is only one small part of parenting, both physically and spiritually. For this

reason, many people may prefer the word "teacher" instead of "parent" for this stage. Disciples who reach this parent/teacher stage have invested much time and effort into the study and practice of Scripture, and because of this, they can consume and handle harder and deeper truths.

Humanly speaking, we not only want but expect people to develop from one stage to another. From the very first moments after their birth, parents have benchmarks for their infants and children. Their heads, body length, and weight are immediately measured and recorded. Parents watch all the percentiles for their height and weight as they grow, often to the point of drawing lines on the walls of their homes and comparing their children's heights. Schools give report cards showing how well children are progressing in their education, as parents expect their children to advance academically.

At the same time, we have a lack of expectations as well. We do not expect a newborn to make dinner or clean his room. We do not expect a toddler or elementary student to get a job. And rarely are parents excited when they discover that their teenager has become a parent. So, we both expect and do not expect or want certain things based on the stage of life and maturity level of the person we are working with.

The same is true, or at least should be true, spiritually. The apostles expected that they should have been able to talk with these various believers about certain things because they should have grown up by that point. At the same time, they did not expect their readers to be beyond where they should have been, yet they continually pushed and encouraged them to grow. The apostles knew there is a balance. We know this is relevant when it comes to children, and we need to understand this is relevant in the spiritual life as well.

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

"Anything worth doing is worth doing well," says the familiar adage. Another that applies here is, "You get what you pay for." Salvation is a gift; discipleship requires time, effort, and sacrifice. The Saviour once asked the great crowds following Him, "Which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?" (Luke 14:28). It seems like a silly question; only a fool would start an endeavor of that size without thinking through what it will cost him. The Saviour agreed, then applied that truth to anyone who wants to follow Him. Salvation is free; discipleship is costly. Discipleship is not easy. "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:18, 20). However, the rewards of discipleship are inestimable and eternal.

- Discipleship is the process by which we learn to follow Jesus, fulfilling those "good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10).
- It is how we achieve spiritual maturity, God's will for us: our sanctification.
- It is our mission (Matt 28:19–20), commanded by the Saviour Himself and exemplified by the apostles (2 Tim 2:2; Col 1:27; Eph 4:11–16).
- It is the theme of or major encouragement in every apostolic epistle.
- It is not something simply glossed over or mentioned infrequently. It has a specific path laid out, explained, and illustrated in detail, proving its supreme importance in the life of the believer (2 Pet 1:3–8).
- And, while discipleship is distinct from salvation and cannot cause us to lose our salvation, the believer who chooses to

not follow Jesus will suffer the loss of fellowship and ministry opportunity in this life and rewards in the next.

CONCLUSION

Thus, we discover that biblical discipleship is a process and that the goal of this process is individual spiritual growth or maturity––a believer in Jesus becoming more and more like Him every day. However, there is one more phrase the apostles repeatedly used––almost like a mantra––to sum up the entirety of the process: "know Him."

> **This is eternal life, that they know you** the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (John 17:3).
>
> We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, **so that we may know him who is true**; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life (1 John 5:20).
>
> T**hat I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death** (Phil 3:10).[6]

In his final preserved letter, Peter presented eight clear, linear steps that are necessary for any person to move from being unsaved to a full disciple of Jesus. Interestingly, Peter saturated his teaching––even bookending his letter––with this vital concept of knowing Jesus better and loving Him more:

> His divine power has bestowed on us everything necessary for life and godliness **through the rich knowledge of the one who called**

[6] Emphasis added.

> **us** by his own glory and excellence. … For if these [eight] things are really yours and are continually increasing, they will keep you from becoming ineffective and unproductive in **your pursuit of knowing our Lord Jesus Christ more intimately** (2 Pet1:3, 8, NET).
>
> **Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity**! (2 Pet 3:18).[7]

May the commands and encouragements throughout Scripture and from your brothers and sisters in Christ around the world spur you on in your own spiritual growth, echoing the apostolic encouragement: "Let us…go on to maturity" (Heb 6:1).

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[7] Emphasis added.

Appendix
Doctrinal Statement

The International Society for Biblical Hermeneutics

SHORT STATEMENT

The International Society for Biblical Hermeneutics affirms the full inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of Scriptures in their original autographs. Through the plain interpretation therein, we affirm the existence of the one Triune God, man's fallen nature, Christ's payment for sin on the Cross, His bodily resurrection, the necessity and sufficiency of faith in Christ alone for eternal life, a future pre-tribulational rapture, a seven-year tribulation, and the millennial, Messianic kingdom.

THE BIBLE

We affirm

1. The sixty-six historically accepted books of the Bible are the inspired Word of God, written by men as they were moved by the Holy Spirit to write exactly what was intended by God, while fully preserving each human author's individual style. *(1 Cor 14:37; Eph 3:1–5; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20–21)*

2. The Scriptures are the very words of God with their perfection, authority, and sufficiency extending to the exact vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and literary context. *(Exod 24:3, 4, 8; Matt 5:18; 1 Cor 14:37)*
3. The Bible is the infallible Word of God, completely without error in the original manuscripts. Translations are rightly considered the Word of God to the degree that they preserve the meaning of the original text. *(Ps 19:7–9; John 10:35; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Pet 1:20–21)*
4. The Bible is the supreme and final authority for faith and practice, fully addressing all issues of life either directly or in principle. *(Matt 4:4–10; 2 Tim 3:16–17)*
5. The apostles and prophets were unique messengers of God's written revelation, being guided by the Holy Spirit through the process of inspiration. All Church Age revelation ceased by the end of the first century Apostolic Era. *(John 15:26–27; 16:12–15; 2 Tim 3:16–17; Heb 1:2–4; Rev 22:16–21)*
6. Biblical revelation is always objective truth in both source and content. *(Gen 6:15–22; Exod 20:1–17; 2 Sam 7:5–17; Acts 9:3–6; Rev 1:10–3:22)*
7. The Bible is sufficient revelation for man to understand the will of God and to fully live a life that is pleasing to Him. *(2 Tim 3:16–17)*
8. Scriptures can only be properly interpreted and understood by consistently applying a literal/normal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic which recognizes the author's original intent, including the use of literal language, imagery, and figures of speech. *(Deut 4:2; 2 Tim 2:2; Rev 22:18–19)*
9. The meaning of any given text is only that which is intended by the Divine and human authors and conveyed exclusively by the vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and literary context. *(2 Pet 1:20–21; Rev 22:18–19)*

We deny

1. The notion that there are errors of any sort in the original autographs.
2. The legitimacy of multiple interpretations of any biblical text.
3. That the Holy Spirit ever teaches anything contrary to prior revelation.
4. That the preacher has any legitimate message from God apart from what is found in Scripture.
5. That any passage of Scripture corrects or mitigates against any other passage.
6. That any later Biblical author misinterpreted or reinterpreted any prior Biblical passages when quoting from or referring to them.
7. The complementary hermeneutic of Progressive Dispensationalism, including the use of the "already/not yet" interpretive principle and the softening of progressive revelation and the forcing of a false continuity between the Testaments.
8. Neo-Orthodoxy, or any other system, which, while using evangelical terminology, seriously departs from orthodoxy by accepting the views of destructive higher criticism, by denying the inerrancy of the Bible as historic revelation, by accepting religious experience as revelatory or as the criterion of truth, and by abandoning fundamentals of the Christian faith.

THE TRIUNE GOD

We affirm

1. That there is exactly one, unique, infinite God who eternally exists as three distinct persons—the Father, the Son, and the

Holy Spirit—who are in a perfect relationship with one another. These three persons are fully God and coequal in every way, each with a distinct role in God's program. *(Deut 6:4–6; Isa 61:3; Matt 3:16–17; 28:19; John 1:1; 10:30, 33–36; 14:26; 2 Cor 13:14)*

2. That the second Person of the Godhead came to this earth, was born of a virgin by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, took on human flesh and nature, becoming fully man while continuing to be fully God and was named "Jesus." *(Matt 1:21–23; 2 Cor 8:9; Heb 2:14–18)*
3. That Jesus Christ lived a sinless life, perfectly fulfilling the Law of Moses, and living in perfect accordance with all the eternal principles and laws of God. *(John 8:46; Heb 4:15; I John 3:5)*
4. That Jesus was crucified unto death at the hands of men, dying at the moment of His own choosing. His death was a substitutionary, atoning sacrifice for all mankind. His shed blood fully paid the penalty due for all the sins of every person. However, only those who turn to Him in faith experience the salvation He offers on the basis of His sacrifice. *(Matt 27:50; John 1:29; 3:16–18; Phil 2:6–11)*
5. That Jesus died according to the Scriptures, was buried, physically arose from the grave according to the Scriptures, and was seen by many witnesses after His resurrection. *(1 Cor 15:3–4)*
6. That forty days after the resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven, where He is presently at the right hand of the Father interceding on behalf of believers as our High Priest, though not yet ruling from the throne of David as the Messianic King. *(Ps 110:4; Acts 1:9; Heb 1:3; 5:5–10; 1 John 2:1)*
7. That the indwelling Holy Spirit works in believers to enlighten, guide, convict of sin, and empower them to fulfill God's will by living a life that is pleasing to Him. *(John 14:16–17; 1 Cor 2:10–12; Eph 5:15–21)*

We deny

1. That any ecclesiastical body is authoritative in defining the doctrines of the Triune God.
2. Any doctrine, such as modalism or oneness, that teaches that the members of the Trinity are not distinct persons.
3. The doctrine of Patripassianism, that the Father suffered with the Son on the Cross.
4. The doctrine of ontological subordination, that the Son is less than the Father in power, glory, and/or being.
5. The Openness of God theory that says, in so many words, that God does not know the future.

CREATION

We affirm

1. That God created an innumerable company of sinless, spiritual beings, known as angels; that one, "the anointed cherub" – the highest in rank – sinned through pride, thereby becoming Satan, the open and declared enemy of God and man, that a great company of the angels followed him in his moral fall, some of whom are active as his agents and associates in the prosecution of his unholy purposes, while others who fell are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness until the judgment of the great day." *(Job 1:6,7; Isa 14:12–17; Ezek 28:11–19; Matt 4:2–11; 25:41; 1 Tim 3:6; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6; Rev 20:10)*
2. That Adam and Eve were the uniquely created first humans, that they were created in the image of God, that all humans have descended from them, that there is one human race, that the whole of humanity (with the exception of eight people)

was killed in the flood, and that all humans have descended from this small group. (*Gen 1:26–28; 3:20; 7:7–23; 8:15–19; 9:1*)
3. That God put man as ruler over the creation to subdue it, that man is a steward of the environment, and that the creation is under a curse due to Adam's fall into sin. (*Gen 1:26–31; 2:15; 3:14–19; 9:2; Prov 12:10; Rom 5:12*)
4. That the Genesis record should be taken in its plain sense, which leads to the conclusion that the earth is relatively young. (*Gen 1:31; Exod 20:11; 31:17*)

We deny

1. That any passage of Scripture conflicts with genuine scientific reality.
2. That the narratives of Genesis 1–11 are mythical or allegorical.
3. That the Bible presents the earth as anything other than a round and spinning ball.
4. That scientific hypotheses about origins of life or matter may legitimately be invoked to overthrow Scriptural teaching about creation.
5. That an Old Earth interpretation of Genesis *necessarily* rejects the gospel or the inerrancy, infallibility, and sufficiency of Scriptures.
6. Any philosophy which values the creation over humanity or diminishes the creation for the sake of humanity.

SALVATION

We affirm

1. That the saving transaction between God and the sinner is simply the giving and receiving of a free gift of God's grace

through faith in Jesus Christ, such that no act or promise of obedience, preceding or following that faith, may be added to or considered part of that faith as a condition for receiving everlasting life. *(John 4:10; Rom 4:5; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8–9; Titus 3:5; Rev 22:17)*

2. That at the moment of faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit permanently regenerates, indwells, and baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ (the Church), which includes all born-again believers in Christ from Pentecost to the Rapture. *(Acts 2:1–4; 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:11–14, 4:4–6)*
3. The doctrine of eternal security, that God preserves the believer's eternal life regardless of his perseverance, and that assurance of salvation is the believer's birthright on the basis of Christ's finished work. (*John 3:16–18; 5:24; 10:28–29; Eph 1:13–14; 4:30; 1 John 5:13*)
4. That sanctification is positional, progressive, and eschatological, that the believer has been set apart unto God, that he is being conformed to the image of Christ to a greater or lesser degree, and will be perfected at the resurrection. *(John 17:17; Rom 6:1–14; 8:1–5; 2 Cor 3:18, 7:1; Eph 4:24, 5:25–27; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 10:10, 14, 12:10; 1 John 3:1–3)*
5. That every saved person still possesses his old sin nature, but also has a new nature with provisions made for victory over the sin nature through his identification with Christ and submission to the indwelling Holy Spirit. *(Rom 6:1–13, 8:12,13; Gal 5:16–25; Eph 4:22–24; Col 3:10; 1 Pet 1:14–16; 1 John 3:5–9)*

We deny

1. That one's works are meritorious toward his salvation or that one can obtain salvation while trusting in his own works rather than Christ's.

2. That salvation has ever been or ever will be by anything other than grace through faith regardless of the dispensation in which he lives.
3. That it is the believer's responsibility to maintain his salvation or that eternal life may be lost.
4. That assurance of salvation comes from relying on anything other than Christ's work on the cross.
5. That the sin nature can be eradicated in this life.
6. That sin in a believer's life does not hinder his fellowship with God.
7. Universalism, which in its various forms, teaches that all men will be with God in eternity.

ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

We affirm

1. That the church and Israel are two distinct groups in God's plan and will be so eternally. *(Ps 89:33–37; Jer 31:1–4; Matt 23:37–39; Rom 11:1–2, 25–29; Eph 3:1–12)*
2. That God has made specific covenants and promises to national Israel and that His holiness demands that He fulfill them to the believing descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. *(2 Sam 7:12–16; Ps 89:28–37; Jer 33:25–26; Rom 11:1–32)*
3. That the universal church (the "Body of Christ") began on the day of Pentecost and consists of all born-again believers in Christ from Pentecost to the Rapture. *(Matt 16:18; Acts 1:4–8; 2:1–4, 46–47; Eph 2:19–22; 1 Thess 4:13–17)*
4. That Christians are not under the Mosaic Law, but they are responsible to conform to God's righteous standards as revealed throughout Scripture. *(Rom 3:20; 4:3; 6:1–4; Eph 2:8–9)*

5. That the universal church is represented by local churches made up of born-again believers who regularly gather for fellowship, mutual edification, instruction, prayer, and worship. *(Acts 2:46–47; 1 Cor 1:2; Phlm 1–2, Heb 10:25)*
6. That men are exclusively responsible to fulfill the roles of leadership and teaching in the church, particularly in matters of Bible exposition, theology, or other matters that would include exercising spiritual authority over other men. Women have a biblically defined role in ministry to their families, to other women, and to children. *(1 Tim 2:11–15; 3:1–15; 5:14; Titus 2:1–8)*
7. That the Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts of service to all believers according to His will for the building up of the Body of Christ. *(Rom 12:4–7; 1 Cor 7:7; Eph 4:11–13)*

We deny

8. The practices and philosophy of ecumenism or any other movement that seeks to bring believers in Christ into an unequal yoke with those following other world religions, theological liberalism, Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, or any other group that diverges from biblical Christianity.
9. That the church fulfills God's promises to Israel or that God fulfills His promises to Israel in the church.
10. That Christ is currently ruling from the Davidic Throne.
11. That any form of anti-Semitism is glorifying to God.

THE FUTURE

We affirm

1. That in an imminent moment, Jesus will return in the clouds, at which time all the dead in Christ will be resurrected and

all the living in Christ will be caught up (raptured) to be with Him forever. This is the church's "blessed hope." *(1 Cor 15:50–54; Phil 4:5; 1 Thess 4:13–18; Titus 2:13)*

2. That after the Rapture, there will be a seven-year tribulation period, which is a time of wrath from which the church will be delivered (through the rapture), and that this tribulation serves to bring Israel to repentance and to pour out God's wrath on the nations. *(Dan 9:24–27; Joel 3:1–3; 1 Thess 1:10; Rev 3:10)*
3. That after the Tribulation, Christ will physically return to the earth to establish His kingdom on the earth for 1,000 literal years (the Millennium), ruling the nations from the throne of David in Jerusalem. *(2 Sam 7:8–16, Matt 25:31; Rev 20:1–6)*
4. That every Christian will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, to assess the quality of his Christian life on earth. The Judgment Seat of Christ is for believers and is distinct from the Great White Throne Judgment, which is for unbelievers. The anticipation of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ should motivate believers to persevere. *(1 Cor 9:24–27; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 John 2:28; Rev 20:11–15)*
5. That this earth will pass away and that God will create a new heaven and new earth where every justified person will dwell for eternity with Him. (*Isa 66:22; Rev 21:1–7*)
6. That every unjustified person will spend eternity separated from God in the Lake of Fire, experiencing eternal conscious torment. (*Isa 66:24; Matt 25:41–46; Rev 14:10–11; 20:11–15*)

We deny

1. General Judgment Theory, which equates the Great White Throne Judgment with the Judgment Seat of Christ and holds that all people, believers and unbelievers alike, will be judged at this general judgment to determine their eternal destinies.

2. That the Old Testament promise of a literal, physical, earthly, Messianic Kingdom has been redefined or abrogated by New Testament revelation, such that the promised kingdom will not literally be fulfilled and instead has been replaced with a current spiritual reality.
3. Partial rapture theories, which hold that only faithful believers are raptured and that unfaithful believers will face God's wrath.
4. That the church will go through any part of Daniel's seventieth week.