

21 TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT GRACE

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Notice: Text from this book will be italicized and in Ariel font. Notes from Pastor Mike Smith will be in Times New Roman font. All scriptures will be italicized and in bold.

LESSON 1

How Were People Saved in the Old Testament?

by Jim Myers

Introduction

“The most important question that anyone can ask is, “What must I do to be saved?”

The various Hebrew words translated, “to save” or, “salvation,” rarely relate to personal salvation from eternal judgment or ultimate entrance into heaven.”

“The principal Old Testament word, yasha, which is translated by soteria in the LXX, is used 353 times in the Masoretic text. By far the most common usage in the Old Testament is of God’s deliverance of His people from struggles (Ex. 14:30). Scores of passages could be cited.

Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man* (Monument, CO: Paniym Group, 2011), 89.

“The core meaning of the word SOZO as well as its Hebrew term, YASHA, means to deliver from a predicament. That might mean deliverance from illness, in which case we would translate it healing. It might be deliverance from

one's enemies in a battle and we would translate it as deliverance." Dr. Robert Dean NT- 06, Romans

*"It is in the New Testament, however, that the full breadth of meaning of salvation comes to the forefront. The verb sozo occurs 106 times and the noun soteria 46 times. The meaning "deliver from hell," while rare in the Old Testament, is quite common in the New. Statistically, sozo is used 40 percent of the time in this way and soteria 35 percent. Like the Old Testament it sometimes simply means healing or recovery of health. When this happens, the notion of "deliver" disappears altogether, and the word simply means "to heal." For example, in response to the faith and resultant healing of the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years, Jesus said: "Your faith has healed [sozo] you" (Mt. 9:21–22). This sense is quite common (19 percent). Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man* (Monument, CO: Paniym Group, 2011), 112.*

**"There is probably more confusion over the terms save and salvation than any other term in the Bible. Even ... believers are sometimes confused by the use of these terms in Scripture. Most people think that the vast majority of uses of the words save and salvation in Scripture refer to salvation from eternal condemnation. Actually the exact opposite is true. Biblical salvation rarely refers to salvation from hell (even in the NT)." Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society Volume 16 (2003).*

"In the book of 1 Timothy the word "save" has different meanings in different chapters. In 1 Tim. 1:15 we read that Christ came into the world to save (Gk. sozo) sinners. The

word means “to deliver from hell.” But who would claim that the word means that in 1 Tim. 2:15 where we are told that the women will be saved (Gk. sozo) through childbearing?” Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man* (Monument, CO: Paniym Group, 2011), 89.

*The phrase “**save a soul**” (Gk. sozo psyche) seems to have a technical meaning of “preserve your physical life. It remains for scholars of historical theology to discern how this phrase ever became connected with the idea of deliverance from hell. It is never used that way in the Bible, and such an idea would have been foreign to any Jewish reader of the New Testament.* *ibid* p.116

When a ship sinks or an airplane crashes, they often say that there were blank number of souls saved. Of course this has nothing to do with being saved from the lake of fire.

Most people make the mistake of taking an illegitimate totality transfer when using the words “save” and “salvation”. This occurs when a meaning in one context is made to be the meaning in all contexts. That means that they interpret those words to mean “eternally saved from hell” every time they are used. This is one of the major reasons their soteriology is so mixed up.

Example: **James 2:14 - What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith **save** [sozo] him?**

The answer to this question depends on whether James was referring to being eternally saved or temporarily delivered.

If he was referring to the former, the answer is “yes”; if he was referring to the latter, the answer is “no”. So how can one be able to know which one is the correct answer? CONTEXT.

James 1:21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to **save your souls.**

There is no way that this verse refers to eternal salvation because it would be salvation by works which is apostasy. The term “save your souls” means to deliver from danger or death.

“There is nothing here about a “saving faith” and one that does not save in the sense of final deliverance from hell. There is no perseverance in holiness taught. Nowhere does James tell us that works are the inevitable result of the faith that delivers from hell, nowhere, unless salvation means deliverance from hell. But then, if it does, James is teaching salvation by works!” ibid p.119

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

Remarkable as it may seem, there is no explicit gospel to be found in the O.T. There is no specific command to believe in a future Messiah for salvation, nor is there any mention of an

O.T. saint who put faith in a promised Savior for salvation. There are no clear salvation verses like John 3:16 or Acts 16:31 to be found in the O.T.

How then were people justified before God in the O.T.? 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 sin” (Hebrews 10:4). “For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness’” (Romans 4:3).

Justification has always been by faith and never by law. “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from the law: (Rom. 3:28). Only by faith, whether in the O.T. or in the N.T. can one be a son of Abraham. (Galatians 3:5-7 & 11).

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 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.”

Of course, Jesus Christ took care of our justly deserved punishment on the cross and satisfied the justice of God. God postponed judgment on man's sins in the O.T. until Jesus Christ came and went to the cross.

Romans 3:25-26 [Jesus] whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26) for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

“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 O.T. obtain salvation from the penalty of sins? Always by faith. But other questions arise: 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 O.T. They could not understand the Savior 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 O.T. and the N.T. 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 be based on the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ.

Faith was the necessary condition for salvation in the O.T. as well as in the New:

Jonah 3:5 Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.

Genesis 15:6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

This is not a generic faith in the existence of God, but rather, a specific faith in the revelation of the true God who is the sole origin of salvation. "Salvation belongs to the Lord!" (Jonah 2:9).

LESSON 2 (11-7-19)

THREE POINTS OF VIEW

Among evangelical Christians, however, there is not a consensus as to the content of faith necessary for salvation from sin the O.T. 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 for salvation in every age is faith; the OBJECT of faith in every age is God; the CONTENT of faith changes in the various dispensations.

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 we have faith. However, the statement that the content of faith changes in the various dispensations is not accepted by those who hold to 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 Classic Dispensational writers, the specific, of faith in God or some promise made by God, but not faith in a promised Seed or Savior.

This position encounters numerous 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 Dispensationalist, 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.

It appears that Paul Enns stated that whatever the revelation was that one received from God, it was sufficient to receive God's imputed righteousness even though the idea of a redeemer or "the Seed of the woman" was not part of it.

Whereas the Israelites under the law knew about the importance of the blood sacrifice, his knowledge of the suffering Messiah was still limited – but he was saved by faith.

Habakkuk 2:3-4 "For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay. 4) "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith.

The vision was the revelation that God gave to Habakkuk concerning the destruction of Judah by Babylon because of their disobedience to God. Those who were arrogant dismissed that notion and continued to live in defiance to

God. Those who were humble were trying to live a righteous life because they believed the prophecy.

The question is, were they eternally saved because they believed God's revelation that Judah would be destroyed, or were they already eternally saved and living in a manner that reflected their faith?

★ *Dispensationalists thus emphasize that in every dispensation salvation is by God's grace through faith according to His revelation.*

LESSON 3 (11-12-19)

THE COVENANT THEOLOGY VIEW

The view of Covenant theology is that salvation has always been by faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation in the O.T. was by faith in Jesus, except that they didn't know His name.

Covenant theologians are explicit in declaring that Jesus was the object of faith in the O.T. and that God has always required faith in Christ and His redemptive work in order to receive eternal life. Hodge notes:

...faith in the promised Redeemer was required from the very beginning, but from the admitted fact that the O.T. is full of the doctrine of redemption by the Messiah, it follows that those who received the religion of the O.T. received that doctrine, and exercised faith in the promise of God concerning His Son.

“ Buswell agree, “Abel’s faith was, in substance, faith in the atoning work of Christ, the promised Redeemer.” James Oliver Buswell, S Systematid Theology of the Christian Religion, (Grand Rapids, MI. Zondervan, 1962) 2:185

Mr. Buswell seems to be reading a bit more into the scripture than is really there.

Genesis 4:4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;

A MODIFIED DISPENSATIONAL VIEW

There is a position between the classic Dispensational view and the Covenant view, and that is faith in a Savior 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” (Gen. 3:15) that was promised, faith in a Messiah, faith in Yeshua, and yet not believe in Jesus specifically, for Jesus had not yet been revealed.

Many O.T. believers did not believe what we now know to be essential doctrines about salvation, yet they were saved. They were not told to believe in 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 N.T. times are those who give evidence that their faith was based on God who disclosed himself in the Seed of the Woman.

From the very beginning, God had a plan for man's salvation which is centered in the Seed, the One in the protoevangelium (Gen. 3:15).

THE GOSPEL IN THE O.T.

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 3:14-19).

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).

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

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, in looking back to Gen 3:15, the Biblical authors recognized that the One who was promised in that passage would be unique—true humanity because He would be born of a woman, but conceived without the participation of a man.

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. 3

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.
How do we know this?

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 Gen 3:15: that God would provide a Savior, "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 Gen 4:1. The Hebrew text says literally, "I have gotten a man: YHWH." That is the literal rendering. This verse shows that Eve understood that the promise of Gen 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: YHWH."

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 (cf. Leviticus 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)?

Abel offered it in faith. Faith in what or in whom? Obviously he was believing God for something, 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 Gen 4:6-7a 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.

LESSON 4 (11-14-19)

God reveals Himself in a general way by His word and by what He has created. Sometimes He spoke directly to certain people in the OT. Later, He spoke through the written word and eventually through the Living Word.

There was no written Scripture until the time of Moses, so the things that God revealed to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, etc. were passed along by word of mouth.

Everyone from Cain and Able onward can know about the promise of a Savior who will defeat Satan, because the fathers would pass along to their sons, the promise of the Seed of the woman who would have victory over Satan.

Genesis 3:15 And I [God] will put enmity Between you [the serpent/Satan] and the woman [Eve], And between your seed [those under Satan's control] and her seed [Jesus Christ]; He shall bruise you [Satan] on the head [he will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire], and you [Satan] shall bruise him [Christ]; on the heel [Christ's death on the Cross].

The Scriptures tell us that anyone can know about God by what He has created:

Romans 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, 19) because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, **have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.**

When people look at oceans mountains, the sun, moon, and stars, they know that someone much greater than man brought them into existence. Creation, which people see, reveals God's unseen character—the all-powerful Deity. The witness to God in nature is so clear and so constant that ignoring it is indefensible.

So man has self-evident revelation of God through the creation and he has revelation about the coming Messiah (Gen. 3:15) passed along by word of mouth.

There is another specific revelation about the gospel that few know about and that is the gospel in the stars. This has nothing to do with astrology which is Satan's perversion of God's message in the stars.

Consider the following:

Romans 10:13-18 for "Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved." 14) How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15) And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" 16) However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?" 17) So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. 18) But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; **"Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."**

Verse 18 contains a quote from Psalm 19:

Psalm 19:1-4 For the choir director. A Psalm of David. The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their [stars] expanse is declaring the work of His hands. 2) Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. 3) There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. 4) Their line has gone out

through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun,

So Paul plays the “straw man” and expresses the excuse the people would make that they cannot be held accountable to God because there is no way for them to hear God’s message.

He demonstrates that they are accountable to God because they have received God’s message and he refers them to Psalm 19 that describes God’s message in the stars.

When Paul quoted from Psalm 19:4 in Romans 10:18 to prove that people had heard the gospel message even without a preacher, he was saying that what he was teaching in Romans about the gospel was first revealed in the stars.

The stars seem to be stretched out across the sky randomly, not in any particular place or order. But the scriptures tell us that God specifically placed them where they are.

it was God, not chance, that set them in their specific places and keeps track of them.

Isaiah 40:26a Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number...

God has numbered the stars and gave name to every star:

Psalm 147:4 He counts the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them.

God gave the stars specific names and placed them in specific places for a purpose. So how do stars that can’t speak

communicate a message to the entire world that everyone can understand?

The stars are aligned together into groups called constellations which form pictures, images, and signs. Pictures or signs speak a universal language that everyone can understand.

Genesis 1:14 Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be **for signs** and for seasons and for days and years...

This verse reveals two purposes for the heavens: "days and years" clearly denotes the use of astronomical bodies for measuring time. The other purpose is associated with "**signs** and for seasons".

Signs, Heb. OTH; signs convey information:

- 1) A military ensign, and especially that of each particular tribe,
- 2) It can refer to a sign of something past, which serves to keep something in memory, hence a memorial, or monument.
- 3) A sign of something future, a portent

A sign is a mark of something other than itself. For example: The image of a skull and crossbones is not deadly itself but it represents something that is. Signs can communicate without using words.

The Scriptures contain the complete, accurate, and final revelation of God to man. God's message in the stars does not add to the Scriptures nor does it contradict them. Indeed, it verifies them.

It's encouraging and exciting to realize that the same biblical message in the Bible is also found in the names of the stars and in the images they form.

Those who lived during the approximately two thousand years of human history before writing became widely used were not deprived of a way to learn about God and His wonderful plan and promises. Every evening around dusk, the first star that appeared announced the beginning of the spectacular nightly production by the Creator shown on the stage of our immense universe.

Why would God place the stars in specific locations which form images (constellations) and name them if He did not design them to send a message? What a terrible loss of opportunity to get the gospel message out to the entire world would it be if the stars were randomly placed pretty little dots of light in the sky which carry no message.

Psalm 89:37 It [God's covenant] shall be established forever like the moon, and *the witness in the sky is faithful.*

The book of Job specifically names some of the constellations that we are familiar with today:

Job 38:31-32 Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, or loose the belt of Orion? 32) Can you bring out Mazzaroth in its season? Or can you guide the Great Bear with its cubs?

What is the ***Mazzaroth***? It is the band of sky that the sun, moon, and planets travel in their apparent path around the earth. It is also called the Zodiac. The center of that band is called the Ecliptic.

The Big Dipper is actually part of a larger constellation called the Big Bear. It is also mentioned in Job 9:9

Job 9:9 Who makes the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south;

We also see these names in the book of Amos.

Amos 5:8-9 He who made the Pleiades and Orion and changes deep darkness into morning, Who also darkens day into night, Who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the LORD is His name.

Stars' names relate directly to the images that the constellations form & those images convey the same message as the Bible. The meaning of the names of the stars have not changed, nor has the location and configuration of the constellations.

Today, what do we call the constellation that Job called Orion?
Answer: Orion

LESSON 5 (11-19-19)

Stars **PP**

So the people in the OT had the gospel message passed down by word of mouth concerning the promise of the *seed of the woman* and also *the gospel message in the stars* which was also passed down by word of mouth.

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.

The promise of the seed of the woman guaranteed the defeat of Satan and His wounding (being bruised on the heel – His sacrificial death on the cross - *Gen. 3:15*), was made before the Lord sacrificed the two innocent animals (*Gen. 3:21*) in order to cover the physical and spiritual nakedness of Adam and Eve.

So it would appear, Adam recognized that the substitutionary sacrifice of innocent animals represented the substitutionary sacrifice that the seed of the woman (JC) would make in order to satisfy the justice and righteousness of God.

When OT believers sacrificed innocent animals, it was a public demonstration that they believed that the seed of the woman would someday make things right between them and God.

Noah didn't know that Jesus Christ would voluntarily be sacrificed on the cross, but he believed the promise that someday the seed of the woman would remove the sin barrier between man and God, so he felt comfortable in approaching God through the sacrificial death of animals which portrayed future sacrificial death of the seed of the woman (JC).

Abraham—Genesis 12:1-3

While Abram was still in Ur of the Chaldees, God had spoken to him (Acts 7:2; Heb 11:8): 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 Gen 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 Gen 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 Gen 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. 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. As Paul wrote, **“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).**

In **Gen 12:3** it is said, **“in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”** Later, in **Gen 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: **“Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, ‘And to offsprings,’ referring to many, but referring to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ who is Christ” (Gal 3:16).** 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 11:17-19). So he also knew about resurrection.

The Song of the Suffering Servant of YHWH

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 YHWH who will bear the sins of the world.

The substitutionary nature of His death is explicit:

Isaiah 53:5-6 says: But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds 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. (Emphasis added.)

Isaiah 53:10-12 adds: Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, 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.
(Emphasis added.)

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 Savior (Ps 118:22; Zech 3:9; cf. 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).

Romans 9:33 As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

1 Peter 2:6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."

Isaiah 30:15-16 For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength." But you were not willing, 16 And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses,"

 **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 Savior, 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.**

Romans 3:23-26 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24) being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25) whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His

righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26) for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

LESSON 6 (11-21-19)

Can We Find Jesus in the Old Testament?

Throughout the Old Testament, more and more information is given about a Deliverer, a Savior, 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 prefix meaning, "my," "your," or "his," it is the same word, Yeshua (Jesus), used in Matt 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" (Matt 1:21).** 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 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 **Isa 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 **Isa 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.

*This salvation is Jesus Himself. 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**).*

The hope of Israel is the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him is steadfast love and plentiful redemption: 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. (Ps 130:3-8)

Psalm 130:3-8 If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? 4) But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared. 5) I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, And in His word do I hope. 6) My soul waits for the Lord More than the watchmen for the morning; Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning. 7) O Israel, hope in the LORD; For with the LORD there is lovingkindness, And with Him is abundant redemption. 8) And He will redeem Israel From all his iniquities.

Conclusion

People before the time of Christ did not have a full picture of the Savior 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 Savior. Faith in a god who is not sending the Savior 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 **Rom 4:16** says, “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace...”*

This concludes the article, [21 Tough Questions About Grace. How Were People Saved in the Old Testament?](#) by Jim Myers

The following are a few quotes from other authors on this same subject matter:

Eternal redemption is obtained solely through God’s grace. That is the unique element of the Hebrew Scriptures and the sine qua non [something absolutely indispensable or essential] of the Christian faith.

Even if the terms save and salvation carry a sense of eternal salvation in some OT passages, there is no explicit instance where the term appears solely with a spiritual nuance. While salvation may come with a spiritual nuance, in the OT, it always has a broader meaning.

Salvation here comes by physically restoring national Israel to the land of promise, placing them in a position of blessing.

A survey of the literature addressing this subject reveals that a consensus in biblical scholarship exists concerning the meaning of OT salvation by showing that a broader meaning always appears instead of the deliverance-from-eternal-condemnation nuance.

Therefore if anyone interprets salvation in the OT as eternal condemnation, he will miss the meaning and application God intends to convey.

René A. Lopez, "Old Testament Salvation—From What?," Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society Volume 16 16, no. 31 (2003): 56.

White states that " 'The Lord is ... my salvation' is the heart of OT testimony, always ... Later Judaism anticipated a messianic deliverance which includes political, national, or religious elements (Pss. Sol. 10:8; T. Benj. 9:10; cf. Luke

1:69... R. E. O. White, "Salvation," in Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 967,

Developing this same point Joseph C. Dillow states that, "The breath of salvation is so sweeping and intended aim so magnificent that in many contexts the words used defy precise definition. Yet these difficulties have not thwarted numerous interpreters from assuming, often without any contextual justification, that the words used invariably mean 'deliverance from hell' or 'go to heaven when you die.' It may come as a surprise to many that this usage of 'salvation' (Gk. sōtēria) would have been the least likely

meaning to come to mind of a reader of the Bible in the first century,” (*The Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man* [Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing, 1992], 111–13).

Then, not surprisingly, (Wilkin, “Salvation in the Old Testament, Part 1,” pp. 2–3), says: “Biblical salvation rarely refers to salvation from hell (even in the NT). This is especially evident in the OT. During my doctoral work, I looked up every OT occurrence of the various words which mean save and salvation. I found that over 90% of the references concern salvation from enemies and from other difficulties in this life,” emphasis original.

Although Messiah’s sacrifice is the means by which God furnishes eternal-life-redemption for humanity (Isa 49:1–53:12; 65:1), one must notice that in Isaiah’s writings (and in other prophets) it is also the grounds by which God will temporally and eternally rescue (by His mercy) Israel from her enemies and permanently restore her to the promised land and national prominence. In Isaiah the means and method—i.e., Messiah’s sacrifice (Isa 7:14; 9:6–7; 11:1–5; 37:32; 42–43; 49:1–53:12; 54–56)—of how God will restore Israel to the land of promise is an important element.

However, the emphasis of the meaning of “salvation” lies, not on the means, but on the end result of rescuing Israel from her enemies, by restoring them to the promised land, and restoring peace on earth by which all humanity will benefit (Isa 2:1–4; 9:7; 10:20–34; 11:6–12:6; 27:2–13; 35; 37:1–7; 59:16–62:12; 65:17–66:24). Thus, salvation experience in Isaiah finds its basis in justification through Messiah’s atonement (Isa 52:13–53:12) but has a broader

scope that encompasses all of God's national and universal promises to restore humanity to a place and position of blessing. *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society Volume 16 (2003).*

The earliest historical record of crucifixion dates to c. 519 BC, when Darius the Great of Persia crucified 3,000 of his political enemies in Babylon. Before the Persians, the Assyrians were known to impale people. The Greeks and Carthaginians later used crucifixion, as well. www.gotquestions.org/crucifixion.html

LESSON 7 (11-26-19)

MUST WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE TO HAVE ETERNAL LIFE?

By Michael D. Makidon

Introduction

Lying in bed at the age of twelve, unable to fall asleep, I vividly remember thinking to myself, "If I die in my sleep, will I make it into heaven?" In the stillness of my pitch-

dark bedroom, every altar call that I had ever heard came streaming back into my mind, “Are you really a Christian? Are you good enough?” Because I knew that I could never measure up to my church’s standards, I thought all hope was lost. Although we spent almost every waking hour immersed in church activities, I had no assurance of my eternal destiny. It was in these moments that I would hear the voice of one of my pastors, “Did you truly believe?” According to him, faith was not merely belief in something or someone; it was an ongoing emotional and legalistic battle between me and my flesh. The child-like faith of John 3:16 was undercut by what he described as true faith: “Take up your cross and follow me!” My pastor was inspired by theologians who wrote things like:

Don’t believe anyone who says it’s easy to become a Christian. Salvation for sinners cost God His own Son; it cost God’s Son His life, and it’ll cost you the same thing. Salvation isn’t the result of an intellectual exercise. It comes from a life lived in obedience and service to Christ as revealed in the Scripture; it’s the fruit of actions, not intentions. There’s no room for passive spectators: words without actions are empty and futile...The life we live, not the words we speak, determines our eternal destiny.

Yet, I knew that if my eternal life depended on me, I might as well give up.

After moving to New Orleans, God put several people in my path to share their faith with me. One was a youth pastor who asked me, “Mike, could it be that you’ve been going to church your whole life but don’t understand the gospel?” He shared with me that, “we are saved simply by faith alone in Christ alone.” It took me almost twenty years to believe Christ's promise and gain assurance of my eternal destiny, but once I did, it irrevocably changed my life.

What Is the Problem?

Just like my pastors did growing up, many well-meaning pastors and theologians qualify the words faith and believe. In James 2:14, many attach negative words, such as “false” or “this kind of,” to faith.

James 2:14 What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?

Others believe that the Biblical authors make a distinction in the original language of the NT between those that believed for a time (aorist tense) and those that continue to believe (present tense). A leading grammarian believes that the writers of the NT commonly used the present tense to describe true belief because, “by and large [they] saw continual belief as a necessary condition of salvation.” He continues by explaining that “the promise of salvation is almost always given to” those who believe in the present and almost never to those that

believe in the aorist. In other words, this grammarian is saying that if a Biblical writer used the Greek aorist to describe the action of believing, we can assume that their faith stopped short of true belief. Conversely, he is saying that if the Biblical author used the present tense, we can assume that they truly believed because their faith would continue without end.

For those who believe one must continue to believe to truly have eternal life, this view makes sense. For example, they might point to John 2:24-25 as evidence of false faith.

John 20:30-31 Many believed (aorist) in Jesus because of signs that Jesus did. Even though the purpose of the signs in John was to lead people to faith in Christ.

Some believe that those who believed in Jesus on the basis of the miraculous did not truly put their faith in Christ (see discussion below).

They could then point to John 3:16 as evidence of true faith. In this passage, John uses a present tense participle to describe faith. The present tense in John 3:16 describes a belief “which leads to salvation” as opposed to the aorist, “which stops short of true salvation.” In other words, some believe that true faith continues (present tense) and false faith is only temporary (aorist).

In order to understand how the present tense is being used in John 3:16, we must understand how the verb functions in general in Greek and how the writers of the NT use the verb in various contexts. Once we understand the verb and its use in the NT, we will turn to John 3:16. John 3:16 will help us see if the view in question—that we have to continue believing to be saved—is correct or if the way John uses the present and aorist in John 3:16 is more consistent with how the verb to believe functions in the NT and the way the NT authors use it.

How Does to Believe Function in the New Testament?

Discussions that surround the verb to believe generally have to do with the difference between the aorist and the present tense in Greek. However, what most ignore is what kind of verb it is. Believe is a stative verb—a verb without dynamics or change. A stative verb describes a state of being (i.e., love, believe, know, have), not an action (i.e., walk, do, say, dance).

When a person loves someone, they enter into a state of love. If we say, “he loved his wife,” it is possible that the situation has changed, yet, we would not assume that his love ceased unless someone tells us otherwise. If we say, “He loves his wife,” we would suspect that he will keep on loving her until we’re told differently. The same thing holds true for the verb to believe. When someone believes something, he enters into the state of belief—the end is unspecified. If one says, “Joe believes,” the

verb implies that he is in the state of believing and will continue in that state continuously until something happens to change his mind. If one says, “When Joe saw the ships disappear over the horizon, he believed that the earth was round,” the verb does not define how long his belief will continue into the future. It is likely that Joe will die believing that the earth is round, though it is possible that something could change his mind in the future. The Greek present tense works the same way with stative verbs.

The problem with those that say John 3:16 teaches that you have to continue to believe in order to be saved is that they are reading their theology into the verb and into the verse. Some translate John 3:16 as, “everyone who [continually] believes in him should not perish.” There is no indication in John 3:16 that we have to continue to believe in order to have eternal life. Although the present tense can have a continuous aspect, there should be an indication from the context. For example, Acts 16:18 says, “And this she kept doing [present tense] for many days.” The word kept was added by the translators to the present tense verb to do because the phrase “for many days” lets us know that the action had continued for a time. But by contrast, in Matthew 17, a man knelt before Jesus and said:

Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic [lit. “experiences seizures,” present] and he suffers

[present] terribly. For often he falls [present] into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him. (vv 15-16)

Clearly the boy didn't experience seizures, suffer, and fall continuously. These are dynamic verbs and the action is assumed to last for a certain amount of time. If he never stopped falling into the fire and water, he would have either died from his burns or from drowning. This would be an almost comical misuse of grammar.

*That idea of continuation is not communicated by the present tense alone. When NT authors want to express a continuation, they use contextual clues or words to indicate what they mean. After all, if John wanted to include the idea of continually believing, he could have used the Greek verb *epimenō*, which means, "to continue." With such a distressing point of doctrine, John would have spoken clearly rather than cloud it in ambiguity. (After all, assurance of salvation is greatly undercut, or even impossible, if we must continue to believe until the end of life because we cannot see into the future.)*

Commentators often place a continuing aspect onto the verb to believe when there are no contextual clues or modifiers to show that continuing to believe is intended. This is a misunderstanding of how the verb functions. In this chapter, I will argue that the verb, to believe functions as a stative verb in the NT, therefore the NT

writers use the aorist to refer to entrance into the state of believing and the present as describing someone being in the state of believing. Let's see if the New Testament bears this out.

LESSON 8 (12-3-19)

How Is “to Believe” Used in the New Testament?

The Tax Collectors (Matthew 21:32) The twenty-first chapter of Matthew's Gospel contains a story about Jesus' authority being challenged. After refusing to explain His authority, Jesus tells the elders and the chief priests the Parable of the Two Sons.

In order to make a contrast, Jesus states, **“Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you”** (v 31b). To eliminate any confusion, Jesus explains, **“For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe [aorist] him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him [aorist]. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him [aorist]”** (v 32). If Jesus meant for the contrast to be between the true faith of the tax collectors and prostitutes and the lack of faith on the part of the chief priests and elders, why did Matthew use the aorist for both groups? This seems to conflict with the distinction some try to make between the present and aorist forms of the verb.

The Wedding Miracle (John 2:11)

*After Jesus performed his first miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, John writes that the “**disciples believed [aorist] in Him**” (John 2:11). This began Jesus’ series of signs that would prove that He truly was the Christ.*

John 2:11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed [aorist] in Him.

John 20:30-31 gives the purpose for Jesus performing signs: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Thus, if the purpose of the signs was so that people would believe that Jesus is the Christ, it would seem that the disciples truly came to faith in Christ and received eternal life in John 2:11.

What reason exists to claim that the disciples’ faith was false? All three verbs in 2:11 are in the aorist (did, manifested, and believed). It is clear from the context that John was retelling the completed story from a later standpoint. Thus, John was in no way trying to convey that the disciples did not truly come to faith in Christ. He was merely retelling a completed story from his present point of view, and he used the aorist to show that the disciples entered into the state of believing in Christ.

The Faith of His Disciples (John 2:23) John 2:23 states, **“Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed [aorist] in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.”**

Concerning this verse, Morris writes, “The verb ‘believed’ is in the aorist tense; many came to the point of decision. Yet we should probably not regard them as having profound faith.”[36] After calling into question their faith, he explains that they believed only because they were attracted by Jesus’ miracles but did not experience “genuine conversion.”[37] The very point of the signs was to bring people to faith in Christ (John 20:30-31). To deny this fact is to disregard the purpose of the Gospel of John and of the signs themselves.

Many would regard the faith in 2:23 as false because of vv 24-25: **“But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.”**

Yet, there is good reason Jesus did not trust His mission to new believers. Only six chapters later, many Jews came to believe in Jesus (John 8:30-31, aorist and perfect) and then after learning more about who He was, picked up stones to throw at Him (John 8:59).[38] He had good reason not to trust new converts. They had entered into the state of believing, but their line of belief was not long enough to be trusted with great tasks. Similarly, no

newly hired Secret Service agent guards the President on the first day.[39] John's account of the disciples' belief and the belief of the crowd does not seek to distinguish between true and spurious faith. On the contrary, John was merely trying to show the entrance into a state of belief.

The Woman at the Well (John 4:39-41)

*One of the greatest illustrations of the fact that the aorist form of to believe does convey true faith is found in the account of the Samaritan woman. John writes, “**Many Samaritans from that town believed [aorist] in him because of the woman's testimony**” (v 39). Some might prematurely assert that they did not truly believe on the account of the woman. However, context clarifies that some did believe the woman: “**many more believed [aorist] because of his [Jesus'] word**” (v 41). In fact, John goes on to quote them as saying, “**It is no longer because of what you said that we believe [present], for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world**” (v 42). Like any good storyteller, when John tells a story—which occurred in the past—he uses the past tense. When he wants to quote what someone said in the past, he uses the present tense. The grammar here does not call into question the validity of their faith.*

The Philippian Jailor (Acts 16:31)

*The narrative concerning the Philippian jailor in Acts 16 is one of the most powerful gospel texts in Acts. The jailor asks Paul and Silas, “**Sirs, what must I do to be saved** (v 30b). And they answered, “**Believe [aorist command] in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household**” (v 31). Clearly, Paul and Silas were not telling the jailor, “Come to the point of decision but do not believe and you will be saved.” Rather, Luke was using the aorist to communicate Paul and Silas’s wish that the jailor would enter into the state of believing.*

The Faith of Abraham (James 2:19)

*One of the greatest illustrations that the aorist and present forms of the verb to believe can both be referring to one who has truly believed can be found in the second chapter of the epistle of James. In this controversial passage, James writes, “**You believe [present] that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe [present]—and shudder**” (v 19) and then later writes, “**Abraham believed [aorist] God, and it was counted to him as righteousness’—and he was called a friend of God**” (v 23). It is interesting to note that most who hold to the view that the aorist describes those that don’t truly believe think that the first reference to faith (v 19) is to false faith even though it’s in the present tense, while the second reference in the aorist refers to true faith (v 23).[40] Thus, given the popular (but incorrect) view of James—that James is writing to distinguish between true*

and false faith—it would seem that demons possess eternal life and Abraham is bound for the lake of fire. Surely everyone would believe that this would be an inexcusable misuse of Greek grammar.

James, however, was not trying to differentiate true and spurious faith in these verses. He merely described something that was true at the time of writing (present, the demons' faith) and something else that happened before the time of writing (aorist, Abraham's faith).

Conclusion

While some theologians try to make a distinction between the aorist and present forms of to believe, their view of temporary faith (aorist) versus true, never-ending faith (present) does not fit the verb's use in the NT. The verb is a stative verb. Hence, the NT authors merely wanted to describe someone entering into the state of belief (aorist) or being in the state of belief (present) in relation to the text.

How Is to Believe Used in John 3:16?

After looking at how the verb functions and how it is used by the NT authors, we can see that stative verbs like “to believe”, communicate entrance into the state in the aorist and being in the state in the present. Making a distinction between the aorist as temporary and the present as without end does not make sense in the

passages above nor does it make sense in John 3:16.

John writes:

For God so loved [aorist] the world, that he gave [aorist] his only Son, that whoever believes [present] in him should not perish [aorist subjunctive] but have [present subjunctive] eternal life.

If we follow the view that the aorist was used by John to communicate temporary faith and the present to communicate unending faith, we must apply the same logic to God's love as well. In this view, since John described God's love in the aorist, God only temporarily loved the world and it was a love that stopped short of true love. However, this is not what the Biblical author meant when he penned this verse. Clearly he meant that God demonstrated His love for us by sending His Son. This was a past event relative to the author writing this verse, so he used the aorist to describe it. Yet, clearly His love continued into the future. By using the aorist, the author meant to communicate the entrance into a state demonstrating His love for the world. Likewise, when he uses the present tense "those who believe," he merely meant that those who are in the state of believing, presently have eternal life in relation to the text. The reader can assume that this belief will continue into the future until we are told otherwise. Thus, in John 3:16, John merely wanted to describe God's entrance into a state of demonstrating His love (aorist) and a present

state of belief (present tense). To say that the aorist indicates something short of reality is false. Likewise, to say that the present tense describes belief that continues forever is saying more than the author wished to communicate.

Conclusion

Some have tried to make a distinction between the aorist and present forms of the verb to believe in the NT. Many have done this out of seemingly good intentions—to motivate Christians to be more faithful in their walk. Nevertheless, they have read their theology into these verses and added a layer to the text which was never intended by the authors. Simply put, with a stative verb like to believe, the aorist and the present tenses do not indicate at all whether the state continues until the end of life or not. If John were trying to communicate that idea, he could have easily used epimenō “to continue” or proskairos, “temporarily” to say so. The verb to believe is a stative verb. The aorist form of the verb merely communicates the entrance into the state of believing, while the present form carries the sense of being in the state of believing. By using the aorist, the Biblical authors were not trying to communicate something less than faith. Likewise, in using the present tense, they were not trying to say that someone has to believe until the day they die in order to have eternal life. John 3:16 simply says that those who are in the state of believing in Christ

at this moment, possess eternal life. It is our life that is eternal, not necessarily our faith. Making persevering in faith a test of true belief would be adding a layer to the gospel that John never intended.

LESSON 9 (12-5-19)

Within the broad evangelical community, one encounters two approaches to the doctrine of salvation: **Calvinism** and **Arminianism**.

Calvinists believe that if you are one of the elect of God, your eternal salvation is secure because you will persevere in faithfulness to God until the end of your life and if you don't, it is proof that you were not really saved in the first place.

Arminianist believe that faith alone in Christ alone is not sufficient to guarantee the final salvation of the believer. One must endure to the end of one's life in being faithful and obedient in order to be saved.

Typical example of one who does not believe in the eternal security of the believer:

“Howard Marshall says that some of the passages that affirm that God's people continue in salvation to the end, but then diminishes their weight by setting over against them those passages that emphasize human responsibility to persevere... The resulting formulation always makes the preservation of God's people unto

*consummated salvation absolutely contingent: God is the one who faithfully preserves his people, **provided they do not defect.***” Kenneth M. Gardoski, “The Case for Eternal Security from Five Key NT Passages,” *Journal of Ministry and Theology* Volume 9 9, no. 1 (2005): 55.

Before we go to scriptures that prove that every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ can be confident before God and man that he or she is eternally saved and cannot lose eternal life, let us first ask a few questions to those who believe one can lose their salvation.

1. How many sins can cause you to lose eternal life?
2. Where is that number given in the Bible?
3. Which sins cause you to lose eternal life?
4. Where are those sins listed in the Bible?
5. How many good deeds does it take to keep eternal life?
6. Where is that number given in the Bible?
7. What type of good deeds must be done to keep it?
8. Where are they listed in the Bible?
9. Can eternal life be regained once it is lost?
10. Where is the answer to that found in the Bible?
11. Can eternal life be lost and regained and then lost again?
12. Is that answer given in the Bible?
13. Does the Bible give an example of anyone who lost eternal life?

14. Where is an example of that found in the Bible?
15. Does the Bible give examples of anyone who lost eternal life and then regained it?
16. Where is an example of that in the Bible?
17. How can you know if you have lost eternal life?
18. Where is that found in the Bible?
19. How can you know if you have regained eternal life?
20. Where is that given in the Bible?

You can read the Bible cover to cover and not find any answers to these questions. Why? Because no such answers are given in the Bible because eternal life cannot be lost and it doesn't depend on any kind works. The apostle John did a great job of summing things up:

I John 5:10-13 The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness [truth of the gospel] in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has made concerning His Son 11) and the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12) He who has the Son [has believed in Jesus Christ] has [eternal] life; he who does not have the Son of God [does not believe in Jesus Christ] does not have [eternal] life. 13) These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know (v. ras) that you have (v. pai) eternal life.

Believers should know that they have eternal life because they have believed in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. According to this verse, nothing else is necessary. That includes persevering to the end of life.

Those who believe that perseverance of the saints is also necessary cannot know if they have eternal life because there is no way to know if they will persevere till the end. Furthermore, there is no way for them to know because there is no way for them to determine whether they are persevering or not.

It would be a good idea to ask people if they are sure that they are persevering and if they say yes, you can ask them how they know. If they say, “I don’t know” or “I hope so”, ask them, “Would you like to know for sure?” They tell them about *1 John 5:13*.

If persevering is necessary for salvation, it should be found in many verses, yet the term perseverance occurs but once in Scripture, and there it is connected with prayer.

Ephesians 6:18* *With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all **perseverance** and petition for all the saints,

It seems that we should identify the Lord, instead of ourselves, with the word “perseverance”. If we are honest with ourselves, we know ourselves to be sinners who are

incapable of persevering morally or spiritually for an extended period of time.

There will be a time when we will have sinless perfection when we receive our resurrection bodies, but to require fallen man who has an inherent sin nature to persevere in faithfulness and obedience is unfair and unjust.

People will often take scriptures out of context in order to prove that persevering is required to be saved.

1 John 2:4-6 *The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5) but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6) the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*

LESSON 10 (12-10-19)

Principle: Persevering is very important, all believers should be unrelenting in their efforts to please God by being obedient and growing in grace and knowledge, BUT this must be motivated by our love and our desire to be good and faithful servants, NOT to obtain or maintain eternal salvation.

Truly, there is a Christian doctrine of endurance taught in the Epistles (Rom. 12:12; 1 Cor. 13:7; 2 Tim. 2:10, 12; Heb. 12:3, 7; James 1:12; 5:11; 1 Pet. 2:20).

2 Timothy 2:10 For this reason (the word of God is not imprisoned.) **I** (Paul) **endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen** (believers), **that they also may obtain** (v. aas) **the deliverance** (from the world, flesh, & the devil) **which is in Christ Jesus** (Phase 2 - experientially) **and with it** (experiential sanctification) **eternal glory** (Phase 3 surpassing grace blessing). [Titus 1:1-2a]

endure – HUPOMENO, ὑπομένω, v. pai; ② to maintain a belief or course of action in the face of opposition, stand one's ground, hold out, endure

2 Timothy 2:11 ~~It is a trustworthy statement~~ Faithful is the Word / BD: For if ^{1st} we died (v. aai retroactive pos. truth Rom. 6:2-3) **with Him, we shall also live** (v. fai future pos. truth Rom. 6:5) **with Him;**

2 Timothy 2:12 If ^{1st} we (faithful bels.) **endure** (v. pai), **we shall also reign** (v. fai a reward) **with Him; If ^{1st} we deny Him** (and some do), **He also will deny us** (rewards);

deny – ARNEOMAI, ἀρνέομαι, v. fmi; ③ to disclaim association with a person or event, deny, repudiate, disown

2 Timothy 2:13 If ^{1st} we (carnal or reversionistic bels.) **are faithless** (v. pai), **He remains** (v. pai) **faithful; for He cannot deny** (inf. am) **Himself** (the Lord will never break His promise of “faith alone in Christ alone” nor can He take back the imputations given when one believes the gospel).

Hebrews 12:3 For consider *Him who has endured* (part. ra) *such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow* (v. aas) *weary and lose heart.*

1 Corinthians 13:7 [Unconditional Love] *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures* (v. pai) *all things.*

(NET) **James 1:12 *Happy* (especially favored, blessed, happy, privileged) *is the one who endures* (v. pai) *testing because when he has proven to be genuine, he will receive* (v. fmi) *the crown of life that God promised to those who love him* (part. pa).**

James 5:11 *Behold, we count those blessed who endured* (part. aa). *You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.*

1 Peter 2:19-21 *For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up* (*endures*) *under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 20) For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it* (v. fai) *with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer* (part. pa) *for it you patiently endure it* (v. fai), *this finds favor with God. 21) For you have been called* (v. api) *for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,*

LESSON 11 (12-12-19) – No Notes

LESSON 12 (12-17-19)

Romans 5:1-4 *Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2) through whom also we have obtained* (v. rai) *our introduction* (access) *by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope* (confidence) *of the glory* (character) *of God. 3) And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing* (because we know) *that tribulation brings about perseverance/endurance;* 4) *and perseverance/ endurance, proven character; and proven character, hope* (confidence); ***Romans 5:5*** *and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

*This doctrine [of endurance] teaches that one of the many character qualities that a believer is to have is endurance. Why is this so? It is true because endurance under suffering produces character (Rom. 5:3-4). Yet, none of those references to the Christian doctrine of endurance speak of “enduring to the end.” Instead, **passages that speak of enduring to the end all occur within the same context—the tribulation** (Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13; Luke 21:19; Rev. 13:10; 14:12).*

Matthew 10:22 *You will be hated by all because of My name, but it **is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved** (delivered into the millennium)*

Matthew 24:13 *But the one **who endures** (part. aa) **to the end** (of the millennium), **he will be saved** (v. fpi delivered into the millennium).*

Mark 13:13 *You will be hated by all because of My name, but the **one who endures** (part. aa) **to the end**, **he will be saved** (v. fpi).*

John Walvoord explains:

The age in general, climaxing with the second coming of Christ, has the promise that those that endure to the end (Mt 24:13), that is, survive the tribulation and are still alive, will be saved, or delivered, by Christ at His second coming. This is not a reference to salvation from sin, but rather the deliverance of survivors at the end of the age as stated, for instance, in Romans 11:26, where the Deliverer will save the nation Israel from its persecutors.¹²

Specifically, this section is referring to the Jewish remnant, who, if they endure to the end, will be physically rescued by Christ at His second advent and they will go into the millennial kingdom in their mortal bodies (Matt. 25:21, 34).

William Kelly explains: “It is evident that the language is only applicable in its full force to Jews—believing ones, no doubt, but still Jews in the midst of a nation judicially chastised for their apostasy from God and rejection of their own Messiah. . . . Thus there is a certain, defined period of endurance—an end to come, as truly as there was a beginning of sorrow. New international Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel According to John (Grand Rapids, Mi: Erdmans, 1995) pl 181

PARALLEL PASSAGES

There are a number of parallel passages to Matthew 24:13 that support my understanding of this text. First,

Daniel 12:1 “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued (saved / delivered).”

Michael tells Daniel that this will be the time of tribulation in which the elect Jews will be rescued, which is the Hebrew word for saved.

*Second, **Mark 13:13**, a direct parallel passage to Matthew 24:13 and says, “**And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.**” The first half of Mark 13:13 is a summary statement of Matthew 24:9–12, which is followed by the endurance statement in both*

passages. **Luke 21:18-19**, also parallel says, **“Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives.”** This is the clearest of all when it reads: **“you will gain your lives.”** “Lives” is the normal word for physical life. Third, **Matthew 10:22**, also within the context of the future tribulation says, **“And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.”** Once again we see an emphasis upon the physical deliverance of Jews during the tribulation after a time of persecution.

Finally, the two passages in **Revelation (13:10 and 14:12)** which speak of the **“perseverance of the saints,”** also are references to physical deliverance. Both references are clearly within a tribulational context and speak of physical deliverance when one endures to the end.

LESSON 13 (12-19-19)

CONCLUSION

We have come to an end of a section in Christ’s discourse. Speaking specifically to Jewish believers during the tribulation (the remnant), He alerts them to the many dangers that will confront them during this unique period of history. Having told them of the great trials of this time, Christ promises that the ones who physically make it to the time of His second coming will be

delivered into the Millennial kingdom which will come at the end of the tribulation period. Maranatha!

Here is another verse that people tend to take out of context by making it salvific:

Galatians 5:21 ...envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things *shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Most believers would allege that “*shall not inherit the kingdom of God*” means that those who are guilty of doing things that are on the list will not go to heaven. Someone should ask them, “Didn’t Jesus Christ pay for those sins on the cross?” How can someone go to hell for committing sins that Jesus paid for in full?

It is too bad that so many believers have never been taught the difference between inhabiting heaven and inheriting heaven. Believers who practice the sins on the list will forfeit the inheriting rights and phenomenal rewards they could have had and but they certainly will go to heaven. Many believers make the same mistake with **1 Cor. 6:9**

No one, angelic or human, can bring a charge against or condemn those who are saved. Since Christ covers all their sins and we possess the imputed righteousness of Christ, imputed on the basis of faith alone in Christ alone, nothing can be charged against a child of God. If any sin could undo a believer’s salvation then either a) Christ’s

death did not pay for that sin, or b) His payment was not enough and it had to be added to by our works.

Both of those statements accuse the death of Christ of being inadequate or insufficient for our salvation, and they are false.

Romans 8:33 “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”

The point is that God’s grace is greater than us, greater than our sins, greater than our thoughts and our works.

Dr. Robert Dean, NT – 04 John

When we realize the dynamics and complexities of what God did to save even one unbeliever and how complex the whole process is, we see how impossible it is to reverse it. There is a radical transformation that takes place in our immaterial being at the moment we are saved. God gives us so many permanent things when we believe in Him, including at least 39 irrevocable assets, so to even think all that it is reversible is irrational.

Below are a few more verses that demonstrates that believers don’t have to maintain their faith in Jesus or anything else in order to keep their salvation:

God the Father’s omnipotence is more powerful than any human attempt to negate salvation. God is the one who

saves, faith is merely the means by which we appropriate the work of Christ on the cross into our life.

John 10:27-28 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28) and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

God is perfect and His attributes are immutable and flawless which means that He keeps His promises. His love, righteousness and justice means He cannot cancel even one gift once it is given, no matter how disobedient, arrogant, or obnoxious the believer might be.

If a person could revoke the 39 irrevocable assets He gives us as a gift. Certainly unbelievers couldn't walk around with 39 spiritual assets now could they? Where is this covered in the Bible?lose his salvation God would have to

Romans 11:29 for the **gifts and the calling **of God are irrevocable.****

Malachi 3:5-6 Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me," says the LORD of hosts.

6) "For I, the LORD, **do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.**

God does not consume them, exterminate them, or wipe them out, why not? Because He has chosen them as His special people and He has made specific promises to them that He will never ever break.

When a person believes the gospel he becomes special to God because he becomes a member of the Royal Family of God. Once a family member, always a family member. That is true with our physical family and our spiritual family.

No one can cease to be a member of their family even if they wanted to. Usually there is a “black seep” in the family which they would like to disown but they are still part of the family. They can be shunned or disinherited but they are still in the family.

1 Peter 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4) to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5) who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Psalm 37:28-29 For the LORD loves justice, And does not forsake His saints; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off. 29) The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it forever.

John 5:24 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and *shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.*

Romans 8:38-39 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39) nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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

This verse is a comfort to many believers because they understand the verse in a general way to imply that God is presently sustaining us in His grace, and that His divine ministry continues a process which began at salvation and continues through time.

However, it cannot justifiably be used to affirm that God's sovereign grace prevents the possibility of prolonged, or serious failure in the Christian life. Nor can it guarantee that a believer will reach maturity as a believer. It means that our salvation is secure and that He never gives up on us.

Jude 1:1 Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and *kept for Jesus Christ:*

John 6:39 "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

John 6:47 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

Galatians 4:7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

Jude 1:24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,

LESSON 14 (1-2-20)

Doesn't Second Corinthians 13:5 Say We Need to Examine Ourselves to See if We Are Saved?

By Andy Woods

Introduction

Second Corinthians 13:5, one of the most hotly contested verses in the entire Bible says, "**Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!**"

Most under-stand this verse as exhorting perpetual introspective spiritual analysis to ascertain if one is truly a Christian. This perspective emanates from adherents of

Reformed Theology, Lordship Salvation, or Hyper Calvinism.

Reformed Theology – is based on the acrostic “TULIP”:
Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited, Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints. Reformed Theology can be traced back to John Calvin, a 16th century theologian, pastor and reformer from Geneva, Switzerland.

Lordship Salvation – emphasizes that submitting to Christ as Lord over your life goes hand-in-hand with trusting in Christ to be saved. It also focuses on a changed life as the result of salvation. Those who believe in Lordship Salvation would have serious doubts about a person who claims to believe in Christ but does not have good works evident in his life... submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ is an issue of spiritual growth, not salvation. Got Questions Ministries, Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2002–2013).

Hyper Calvinism – The belief that God saves the elect through His sovereign will with little or no use of the methods of bringing about salvation (such as evangelism, preaching, and prayer for the lost). To an unbiblical fault, the hyper-Calvinist over-emphasizes God’s sovereignty and under-emphasizes man’s responsibility in the work of salvation. An obvious ramification of hyper-Calvinism is that it suppresses any desire to evangelize the lost. Most churches or denominations that hold to hyper-Calvinistic theology are marked by fatalism, coldness, and a lack of assurance of faith.
ibid

*These systems place a premium **on perseverance in good works as the authenticating sign of being a genuine***

believer. They teach that ^{#9} all true believers will inevitably persevere in good works. Thus, ever-increasing good works demonstrate the authenticity of someone's spiritual status as a true child of God. If the good works are not plentiful, then perhaps he is not God's true child. Perhaps he is a mere professor of Christ rather than an actual possessor of Him.

Thus, in this system, 2 Cor 13:5 means that we should engage in chronic spiritual inventory in order to ascertain the abundance of a changed life and good works. If they are not present, then perhaps we were never saved in the first place.

In 2004 I wrote a booklet entitled “CAN YOU TELL? Can You Tell if People are Saved by How They Live?” It presents and explains the Top and Bottom Circles; gives an inventory of notable believers of the Bible who disobeyed God and committed shocking sins; and a diagram of the Old Sin Nature.

Leading Lordship Salvation advocate John MacArthur explains: *Doubts about one's salvation are not wrong ...Scripture encourages self-examination...In 2 Cor. 13:5, Paul wrote, “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?” That admonition is largely ignored—and often explained away—in the contemporary church.*^[192]

Buswell echoes this sentiment when he says: *But my point is that so long as a professing Christian is in the state of carnality, no pastor, no Christian friend, has the slightest ground for holding that this carnal person has*

ever been regenerated...it is a pastor's duty to counsel such a person. "You do not give evidence of being in a regenerate state. You must remember Paul's warning, 'Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? You are not reprobate, are you?' (2 Corinthians 13:5)."^[193]

This Reformed perspective negatively impacts pastoral ministry and counseling by throwing believers into doubt about the certainty of their salvation. The Reformed perspective relies heavily upon the admonition of 2 Cor 13:5 to motivate believers to test themselves to see if they possess an authentic rather than mere spurious faith. Yet, are Reformed theologians using this verse correctly? Are they respecting its context? It is a simple matter to string Bible verses together to support any pre-existing belief system that one desires. For example, it is entirely possible to make it sound as if the Bible promotes suicide. After all, Judas "went and hanged himself" (Matt 27:5), and Jesus said, "You go, and do likewise" (Luke 10:37) and, "What you are going to do, do quickly" (John 13:27)! A text without a context is nothing more than proof text or a pretext for a theological system. Just as the three laws for successful real estate ventures are "location, location, location," the three laws of proper Bible interpretation are "context, context, context." If the context is not respected, then the interpreter is in danger of doing eisegesis, which involves reading into the passage foreign ideas, rather than

exegetis or drawing out of the passage what is naturally there.

The purpose of this chapter is to show that 2 Cor 13:5, when understood exegetically and contextually, has nothing to do with self-examination in order to ascertain if we are really Christians. Rather, Paul's intent in this verse is to stimulate Christians to test or examine themselves to discern their level of growth as a Christian. Salvation has three distinct phases. First, justification is the heavenly announcement of positional righteousness the moment we trust Christ [Phase 1]. Second, progressive sanctification involves learning to draw upon divine resources, such as the Spirit, so that our daily lives gradually become Christ-like [Phase 2]. Third, glorification occurs when we are liberated from our present bodies, which retain a propensity for sin, at the moment of death [Phase 3].

Comprehending these phases is necessary to properly interpret 2 Cor 13:5. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, Paul here is establishing a test for progressive sanctification rather than for determining past justification. Let us now examine nine reasons supporting this contention.

LESSON 15 (1-7-20)

The Corinthians' Assumed Believing Status

First, throughout the Corinthian letters, Paul assumes or presupposes the saved or believing status of the Corinthian church he is addressing. Since this is the case, why would Paul at the end of these letters suddenly switch horses in midstream and challenge his readers to test themselves to

see if they are really Christians at all? Such an abrupt and awkward conclusion would be out of harmony with the overall tone and tenor of these letters. Notice a few verses from the Corinthian letters showing Paul believed that the Corinthians were regenerate.^[194]

1 Corinthians 1:2: "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, but h their Lord and ours"

1 Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:5 What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.

1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

2 Corinthians 1:1 -"To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia"

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, 22) who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge... 24) for in your faith you are standing firm.

Also see: 2 Corinthians 3:2-3; 6:14-16; 8:9; 10:15

The fact that the Corinthians assumed a believer's status brings up two interesting questions.

1. How can a person know if he is a believer? We have already established that it cannot be assessed behavior. Works have nothing to do with receiving the free gift of eternal life. So how can we know for sure that we are saved?

Of course we learn from the Scriptures that we are saved the moment that we put our faith alone in Christ alone. We are saved by grace through faith.

John 3:36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Some allege that we can't know for sure if we believe something or not. That is nonsense. Every rational person knows what he believes and what he does not believe.

2. How can we know if someone is a Christian? Since no one can make that assessment on the basis of their behavior, we must determine whether he is saved by what he says he believes.

If one says that he is a Christian because he believes in Jesus Christ, he may or may not be saved. Most people in America (71%) identify as Christians. 25% Evangelical, 20% Catholic, and 26% Protestant.

Most of those who profess to be Christian are not. They believe that works must be added to faith in order to be saved. That is why when we ask a person if they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and they say “Yes”, we must also ask them if that is all that is necessary. If they add anything faith alone in Christ alone, you have reason to doubt their salvation.

If they say that faith alone in Christ is all that is necessary, then we should consider them to be a believer. Why would anyone lie about that?

Note Hodges's appropriate comments on 2 Cor 13:5:

Regrettably...these forceful words have been sadly misconstrued. They have been read by some interpreters as though they were a challenge to the Corinthians to find out whether they were really saved or not! This is unthinkable. After twelve chapters in which Paul takes their Christianity for granted, can he only now be asking them to make sure they are born again?... Let the readers of this book examine 2 Corinthians on their own. They will see clearly how often the apostle affirms in one way or another his conviction that his readers are genuinely Christian^[195]

Proving Oneself Applies to the Believer

Second, the notion of testing, examining, or proving oneself is an idea that applies to an authentic believer whose salvation is not in doubt. Second Corinthians 13:5 says, "test yourselves." The word translated "test" (ESV), "examine" (NASB), or "prove" (KJV) is the Greek verb dokimazō. The adjectival form of the word is dokimos, which can be applicable to a genuine believer. In fact, Paul applied this very word to Timothy in **2 Tim 2:15** - **"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."**

The word translated "approved" here is the Greek adjective dokimos. Timothy was obviously a true believer. In fact, Timothy was Paul's son in the faith (1 Tim 1:2). Paul would not have installed Timothy as the pastor at Ephesus if the apostle had any lingering doubts about Timothy's salvation. Interestingly, Paul even applies this very word dokimos to himself just two verses following his exhortation for the Corinthians to examine themselves. **Second Corinthians 13:7** **"...not that we may appear to have met the test..."**

Paul himself was obviously an authentic believer, yet he had no problem applying the adjectival form of dokimazō to himself just as he also applied it to his protégé Timothy. Wilkin explains how the notion of "approval" conveyed through dokimazō and dokimos is a concept that is applicable to a true believer.

Acceptance and approval are two different things. God accepts all believers solely on the basis of their faith in Christ...Approval requires more than faith. It is

conditioned upon spiritual maturity and is not a once-for-all event. A believer who is approved today is not guaranteed approval this time next year. Remaining in a state of Christ's approval is contingent upon continuing to confess Christ in word and deed...^[196]

Disqualification Applies to the Believer

Third, the idea of disqualification is applicable to authentic believers whose salvation is not in doubt. The last clause in 2 Cor 13:5 says, "**unless indeed you fail to meet the test!**" The word translated "fail to meet the test" (ESV) or "disqualified" (NKJV) is the Greek adjective *adokimos*. This word is used two other times in the immediate context (2 Cor 13:6-7).

2 Corinthians 13:6-7 But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test. 7) Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we should appear **unapproved.**

Here, Paul applies the word to himself as he explains that he had not failed the test (v 6) despite the fact that the Corinthians thought he had (v 7). First Corinthians 9:27 is the only other place where Paul uses this same word in the Corinthian letters: "**But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be **disqualified**.**" Paul again applies this very adjective to himself. What did Paul fear that might disqualify him? He never doubted the genuineness of his salvation. In 2 Tim 1:12 he explained, "**...for I know whom**

I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me."

LESSON 16 (1-9-20)

Dillow notes, if adokimos or disqualified here means that "...the apostle Paul was not certain that he would go to heaven...one wonders...how any Christian in the history of the church could ever know for certain that God was his Father!" [197]

Rather, 1 Cor 9:27 is the context of a reward. If disciplining one's body and keeping it under control is what gains justification, then justification would be by works and would no longer be by faith alone. Such an idea would contradict what Paul taught so forcefully elsewhere (Rom 3:28; Eph 2:8-9).

Romans 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

On the contrary, Paul buffeted his body so as to gain a reward above and beyond salvation. Paul was concerned about being disqualified from this prize or reward.

What is the standard for receiving crowns and rewards at the JSC? Is it a matter of passing or failing a test where the one who passes receives rewards and the one who fails receives no rewards? Or will some receive a lesser reward based on the limited amount of divine good they produce?

When Paul said, "*lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified*" 1Cor. 9:27, Does that mean that it was possible for him to be disqualified from receiving any rewards

at the JSC? Paul himself knew that wouldn't happen:

2 Timothy 4:8 *Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which **the Lord**, the righteous Judge, **will give to me on that Day**, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

James 1:12 *Blessed is a man **who perseveres under trial**; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

The normal way of assessing rewards for believers at the JSC is described below:

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 *Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13) each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14) If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15) If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

It seems that all the divine good that believers produce will be rewarded. However, it also seems that in some cases, believers who turn against God and become His enemy, will receive no rewards at the JSC, even if he was once faithful. These believers will be disinherited.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and **Galatians 5:19-21** say that believers who persist in committing sin will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 5:5 For this you know with certainty, that *no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*

These believers will be disinherited which presumably will mean that they will receive no rewards.

1 Corinthians 3:15 If any man's work is burned up, *he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.*

Paul and others explain that rewards can be forfeited (2 John 8; Rev 3:11).

2 John 1:8 Watch yourselves, that you might not *lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive (v. aas) a full reward.*

lose – appolumi, ἀπόλλυμι, v. aas, (2) to fail to obtain what one expects or anticipates, lose out on, lose

Revelation 3:11 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that *no one take your crown.*

Revelation 2:10 ... *Be faithful until death,* and I will give you the crown of life.

In the parable of the “minas” in Luke 19:24-26, the master took away what the worthless servant had and gave it to the faithful servant.

Luke 19:26 "I tell you, that to everyone who has shall more be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.

The awards that Lance Armstrong won were taken away when it was proved that he cheated in the ‘Tour de Franc’ by using stimulating drugs.

Benedict Arnold was a hero for the Colonists in the first War of Independence but he betrayed his country and took a high position in the British Army. Should he have received rewards and adoration for his service to the Colonist before he betrayed them?

*Morris summarizes, "'Castaway' is too strong for adokimos. The word means 'which has not stood the test,' and in this context refers to disqualification. Paul's fear was not that he might lose his salvation, but that he might lose his crown through failing to satisfy his Lord (1 Cor. 3:15)."^[198] Thus, the mere existence of adokimos conveying disqualification in 2 Cor 13:5 ... (unless indeed you **fail the test** v. pai) is insufficient grounds for interpreting it as exhorting believers to second guess the authenticity of their salvation. The word's presented here merely communicates concern about losing out on an additional blessing or reward.*

LESSON 17 (1-14-20)

In the Faith" Refers to Maturity Rather than Position

Fourth, the expression, "in the faith," refers to a test for spiritual growth rather than a test of authentic justification. Second Corinthians 13:5 says, "**Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith.**"

The Reformed position understands the imperative verb examine alongside the prepositional phrase, "in the faith" to

mean that self-examination is necessary in order to discern if we have truly received justification. However, it is more probable to understand this phrase as pertaining to one's development in progressive sanctification rather than a translated position.^[199]

Rather than interpreting "**the faith**" as one's positional justification, Wilkin notes, "'**The faith**' is the body of truth that has been delivered to us from God."^[200]

Outside of 2 Cor 13:5, Paul used the identical prepositional expression, "**in the faith**" (en tē pistei) with a verb three other times. In each instance, Paul was speaking of an experience with Christ rather than one's position in Christ.

1 Corinthians 16:13 Be on the alert, stand firm **in the faith, act like men, be strong.**

Colossians 2:6-7 As you, therefore, have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7) having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established **in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude**

Titus 1:13 This testimony is true. For this cause reprove them severely that they may be sound **in the faith,**

Sometimes Paul used a verb alongside the nearly identical phrase, "the faith," without the preposition, "in":

Romans 14:1 Now accept the one who is weak **in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.**

Colossians 1:22-23 in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach-- 23) if indeed you continue *in the faith* firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard,

Other times he used the similar phrase, "in faith," without the definite article,

1 Timothy 1:2 To Timothy, my true child *in the faith*: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Timothy 3:13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence *in the faith* that is in Christ Jesus.

In each case, Paul was speaking of the believer's experience or progressive sanctification rather than his position.

Outside of Paul's writings, we find other examples of a verb used alongside the similar phrase, "the faith," without the preposition, in:

Acts 14:22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue *in the faith*, and saying, "Through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God."

Acts 16:5 So the churches were being strengthened *in the faith* and were increasing in number daily.

1 Peter 5:9 But resist him, firm *in your faith*, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

These examples also relate to growth in the faith rather than position in Christ. Also, in the same letter, in **2 Cor 1:24**, Paul uses the nearly identical expression, "**for you stand firm *in your faith***." Regarding 2 Cor 13:5, Dillow notes, "Earlier in this same epistle Paul uses the term in the sense of 'standing firm' in the faith...in one's Christian walk, not in the sense of possessing salvation."^[201] Thus, regarding the verb examine alongside the phrase, "in the faith," in 2 Cor 13:5, Lowery concludes:

Paul's question is usually construed with regard to positional justification: were they Christians or not? But it more likely concerned practical sanctification: did they demonstrate that they were in the faith (cf. 1 Cor. 16:13) and that Christ was in them by their obeying His will? To stand the test was to do what was right. To fail was to be disobedient and therefore subject to God's discipline.^[202]

1 Cor. 16:13 Be (v. pam) on the alert, stand (v. pam) firm *in the faith*, act (v. pmm) like men, be (v. ppm) strong.

"Christ in You" Relates to Progressive Sanctification

Fifth, "**Christ in you**" can relate to progressive sanctification. Second Corinthians 13:5 states, "**Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that *Jesus Christ is in you* – unless indeed you fail the test?**"

Many fail to recognize the being “in Christ” has a Positional and Experiential sense.

Positional Sense: Every believer is permanently identified with Jesus Christ the moment he or she believes the gospel. This automatically occurs through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So every believer is positionally “in Christ”.

1 Corinthians 12:13 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.

Acts 1:5 for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Experiential Sense: After salvation, a believer is experientially “in Christ” when he is filled with the Holy Spirit executing God’s plan for his life. When a believer is in carnality, Christ is not in him.

Ephesians 2:7 in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

John 15:4-5 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5)"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

LESSON 18 (1-16-20)

Moreover, when Jesus said, "**Abide in me, and I in you**" (**John 15:4**), He was not speaking of initial faith in Christ but rather continued growth and intimacy with Him.

Because Judas, the only unbeliever among the disciples (John 13:10-11), had already left the Upper Room (John 13:29-31), Jesus was speaking only to the remaining eleven who had already believed (John 15:3). Although the Greek word menō translated "abide" can sometimes refer to initial faith resulting in justification in John's Gospel (John 6:56),^[13] other times it refers to development in Christ or progressive sanctification (John 8:31). Thus, in 2 Cor 13:5, Paul exhorts his readers to test themselves to see if Christ is in them, that is, whether they are making progress in the second tense of their salvation.

John 6:56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

Footnote [13] above: Editor's Note: Another grace centered view of John 6:56, is that it too refers to things related to progressive sanctification. [I do not take the meaning of John 6:56 to refer to the Justification of a believer.]

*The Reformed interpretation understands the phrase, "**Christ in you**," as pertaining to becoming a Christian in the first place. However, this phrase can also be understood as growth in Christ related to greater maturation and development in one's progressive sanctification. For example, in Gal 4:19, Paul writes, "**my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!**" Here, Paul speaks of spiritual childbirth not in terms of justification since he was addressing a believing audience:*

Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Rather, he was speaking of growth in terms of progressive sanctification. Interestingly, Paul uses a similar expression "Christ in me" of himself just a few verses earlier (2 Cor 13:3).

2 Corinthians 13:3 since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.

Dillow notes: ...

Paul's reference to Christ^[NIV] "through [in] me" in verse 3 does not refer to salvation but to the demonstration of powerful speech and deeds. Similarly, the test they are to perform to see if Christ is "in you" (2 Corinthians 13:5) is not to discover if they are saved but whether Christ is manifesting Himself in their works and deeds.

Paul...doubts that Christ is in them in this [experiential] sense. Salvation is not in view at all.^[203]

Let's read a few verses to get the context of **2 Cor. 13:5**

2 Corinthians 13:1-7 This is the third time I am coming to you. Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Paul brought up a legal principle that usually applied to a courtroom situation. But here, it refers to three witnesses: 1) Paul, 2) Timothy, and 3) Titus, who could testify to the reversionistic condition of some of the Corinthian believers.

2. I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned

in the past [reversionists] and to all the rest [those who were still positive believers] as well, that if I come again, I will not spare anyone,

This was a very strong warning to all of the Corinthians. They needed to “test themselves” before Paul came to visit. Some needed to rebound while others needed to stay the course and hang on to their spiritual momentum.

This was Paul’s rebuttal to the accusation that he was a lion when away and a mouse when present, *II Cor.10:1&10*. He would not sugarcoat the situation or spare them from hearing the truth. He loved them enough to be honest, totally objective, and to show no partiality or bias towards them.

3. since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in [through] me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.

The believers in Corinth were not seeking Christ but were seeking evidence to condemn Paul so that they could excuse their blatant disregard for him and his teaching. They were not like the Bereans who searched the scriptures to make sure that Paul’s teaching was in line with God’s Word. These reversionists were not interested in truth but in bringing about Paul’s demise.

Paul reminded them that Jesus Christ was still very powerful among them and perfectly capable of getting His message across to those who wanted to hear it.

4. For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we shall live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you.

Paul was making a comparison of Christ appearing to be weak in voluntarily submitting to the cross. Jesus came as the Lamb of

God but His resurrection demonstrated the power of God in His life.

He was making a comparison between Christ's voluntarily curbing His power and authority and Paul voluntarily curbing his power and authority when he was present with them.

5. Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed **you fail the test?**

Paul turned their accusation toward him, back on themselves. They needed to test themselves as to whether they were in the faith [progressing spiritually], whether Jesus Christ was in them experientially or were they in perpetual carnality.

Below is how Pastor John MacArthur interprets this verse:

*(NKJV) **disqualified** [fail the test] Lit. "not approved." Here it referred to the absence of genuine saving faith.* John MacArthur Jr., ed., The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1785.

*(KJV) **except ye be reprobates** (lit., "Unless you are counterfeits"):* The challenge is to ascertain whether they are genuine believers or fakes. King James Version Study Bible ., electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997),

*(FLSB) **examine yourselves** While Paul's opponents wish to test him, he urges them to examine themselves. If they reject his apostolic authority and instruction, they also reject Christ. If they do not repent, they may prove not to be believers at all.*

Since Paul's words and authority come from God, he can make such claims. John D. Barry et al., Faithlife Study Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012

*(RSB) **Examine ... Test.** See 1 Cor. 11:28; Gal. 6:4. Paul's words help clarify the doctrine of assurance of faith. Paul asks the Corinthians to examine their own lives for evidence of salvation.*

[Then eight things were listed to show evidence of being saved.]

Luder G. Whitlock et al., The Reformation Study Bible: Bringing the Light of the Reformation to Scripture: New King James Version (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1995), 2 Co 13:5.

PRINCIPLE: We cannot find assurance for salvation by focusing on ourselves; we can only find it through focusing on the Word of God which promises eternal life through faith alone in Christ alone.

6. But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.

Paul assured them that he and his team passed the test of being in fellowship with the Lord which included Paul's responsibility of administering divine discipline to those who questioned his behavior and his authority.

7. Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we should appear unapproved.

Paul's deepest longing was for his spiritual children to live godly lives, not that he and his team would appear to be vindicated, but that they would produce experiential righteousness in their lives regardless of what others were saying about Paul and his team.

Nowhere in the Bible are adverbial phrases such as "**truly believe**", "**really believe**", "**truly saved**", or "**really saved**" ever used.

There is no ambiguity, one is saved or he is not. A person knows if he believes the gospel or not, so there is no reason to go back and question his faith nor to analyze his behavior.

The following illustration demonstrates the folly of testing one's family relation by assessing behavior.

Son: "Dad, am I really your son, or am I adopted?"

Father: “Well, young man, it depends on how you behave. If you’re really my son, you will show it by being obedient. If you’re my son, you will have my nature and will never be rebellious.

Son: “But what if I disobey you sometimes?”

Father: “Well, if you disobey too often, then you have every reason to doubt that you are truly my son.”

LESSON 19 (1-21-20)

The Test of Justification View Destroys the Passage's Symmetry

Sixth, the notion that Paul posed a test to determine the authenticity of one's salvation in 2 Cor 13:5 destroys the symmetry of the passage. Apparently, the Corinthians had challenged Paul for proof or dokimē (2 Cor 13:3) that Christ was "in" him (2 Cor 13:3) and that he had not been disqualified or adokimos (2 Cor 13:6-7). Paul, who sometimes employed sarcasm when dealing with the Corinthians (1 Cor 4:8), effectively turned the tables on them. Consequently, in 2 Cor 13:5, Paul challenged them on these very same issues. He demanded proof (dokimazō) that Christ was "in" them and wondered if they had been disqualified (adokimos). Dillow notes the nexus between verse 3 and verse 5 as follows:

The word "yourselves" is first in order in the Gr. sentence; it is emphatic. He is referring back to verse 3, in which he wrote, "you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me." Then in verse 5 Paul turns the thought

around on them. "You, yourselves, should test yourselves to see if he is really speaking in you." [205]

Given this symmetry, in order to discern Paul's point in verse 5, we only need ask on what basis did the Corinthians challenge Paul? The Corinthians never challenged Paul's salvation, but rather whether he had the requisite apostolic authority and spiritual authority necessary to correct them. Thus, when Paul challenged the Corinthians in verse 5, he is not second-guessing their saved state but rather their immaturity or lack of development in their progressive sanctification. [206] In other words, to contend, as the Reformed perspective does, that Paul is questioning the Corinthians' salvation is to ignore the basic symmetry of the passage.

Only Believers Experience Discipline


Seventh, *the test of justification view ignores the reality that only a believer is a candidate for discipline. What if the Corinthians were to fail the test that Paul posed for them in verse 5? Then, they would become candidates for divine discipline. This is perhaps why Paul briefly mentions the number of witnesses that are necessary to impose church discipline back in verse 1 (Matt 18:16). Both discipline imposed by the church (1 Cor 5:5) and by God Himself (1 Cor 11:30-32) is a dominant theme in Paul's Corinthian letters. As Lowery regarding verse 5 observes, "To fail was to be disobedient and therefore subject to God's discipline." [207] This notion of failure of a spiritual test resulting in divine discipline would be nonsensical if the justified status of the Corinthians was at issue. Discipline is*

something that is imposed on the believer rather than the unbeliever. Divine discipline is a sign that one is already God's child (Heb 12:5-11; Rev 3:19).

Scripture Nowhere Tells Believers to Test the Authenticity of Their Faith

Eighth, nowhere in Scripture are believers told to test themselves to determine if they are true Christians.

Therefore, if Paul was imposing a test for justification in verse 5, this would be a first and would be a teaching that is found nowhere else in the Bible. Even the oft-cited Matt 7:20-23 passage, when studied in context, is not for the believer to ascertain the authenticity of his own faith, but rather is to determine if someone is a false teacher (Matt 7:15).^[208] Dillow explains:

 *Nowhere in the Bible is a Christian asked to examine either his faith or his life to find out if he is a Christian. He is told only to look outside of himself to Christ alone for his assurance that he is a Christian. The Christian is, however, often told to examine his walk of faith and life to see if he is walking in fellowship and in conformity to God's commands.^[209]*

Hodges similarly notes: How strange that in our day and time we have been told so often that fruitlessness is a sure sign that a person is unsaved. Certainly we did not get this idea from the Bible. Rather, the Bible teaches that unfruitfulness in a believer is a sure sign that one is no longer moving forward, no longer growing in Christ. It is a

sign that the Christian is spiritually sick, and until well again, cannot enjoy spiritual success.^[210]

The Reformed View Damages Assurance of Salvation

Ninth, the test of justification view destroys the believer's assurance of salvation. If the Reformed interpretation of 2 Cor 13:5 is correct and believers are to engage in perpetual self-examination in order to ascertain if they are truly believers, then one can never know with certainty whether he is truly saved. Nagging doubts about this issue would perpetually cloud the believer's mind all his days. Such a mindset contradicts the explicit Biblical promises of assurance (John 6:47; 1 John 5:13). In John 5:24, Christ promised, "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" (emphasis added). Has is a present tense verb communicating that eternal life becomes a present reality at the point of faith in Christ. "Has passed from" is a verb in the perfect tense communicating a onetime past event with ongoing benefits in the present. Such language hardly communicates the persistent entertainment of doubts about one's salvation. Lest one think that assurance of salvation is a new and aberrant teaching, it is found in the doctrinal statements of leading evangelical institutions. Article 11 of the Dallas Theological Seminary doctrinal statement, entitled "Assurance," states:

We believe it is the privilege, not only of some, but of all by the Spirit through faith who are born again in Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, to be assured of their salvation

from the very day they take Him to be their Savior and that this assurance is not founded upon any fancied discovery of their own worthiness or fitness, but wholly upon the testimony of God in His written Word...[211]

Conclusion

Although 2 Cor 13:5 is frequently used by Reformed theologians as a test for the validity of one's status as a child of God, such a theological proposition is not borne out by a careful exegesis of the text. Nine reasons have been offered in support of this contention. The Corinthian audience's regenerated regenerated state is already presumed. Phrases such as, "prove," "disqualification," "in the faith," and, "Christ in you," are applicable to authentic believers. The Reformed view also ignores the passage's symmetry, divine discipline as applying only to the believer, and that Scripture nowhere else harmonizes with the Reformed view's interpretation about a person testing himself to determine if he is truly saved. Finally, the Reformed interpretation destroys the believer's assurance of salvation. Rather than conveying a test for determining the validity of one's justification, in actuality, 2 Cor 13:5 serves as a test to determine ones development or growth in the middle tense of salvation, otherwise known as progressive sanctification.