

Salvation, Eternal Security, and Assurance

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Introduction

A false view of the essence or composition of man—mankind or human beings—will always lead to a false view of the salvation of man. The mainstream Protestant Christian understanding is that man is an eternal non-physical being living inside a physical body, and at death the non-physical being leaves the body and continues living eternally either in heaven or hell. And since man lives eternally regardless, salvation must consist of something other than living eternally. Therefore, the concept of salvation is that the eternal non-physical being becomes transformed from an unsaved state to a saved state before death.

On the other hand, if man is a mortal physical being destined for annihilation after death, then salvation isn't a change in state but getting victory over death to live eternally as Scripture teaches, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him **should not perish, but have everlasting life**" (Jhn 3:16); "And I give unto them **eternal life**; and they shall **never perish**, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand" (Jhn 10:28); "For the wages of sin **is death**; but the gift of God **is eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:23).

Our conclusion about the essence of man—whether man is an eternal non-physical being or a mortal physical being—has great implications on our understanding of salvation and assurance or lack thereof. In the view that man is an eternal non-physical being, salvation is a change of state the moment a confession of faith in Jesus Christ is made—the person passes from an unsaved state to a saved state as a born again new creature. But Jesus' teaching, "Ye must be born again" (Jhn 3:7), and Paul's statement, "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature" (2Co 5:17), are simply misunderstood and misapplied. The entire concept that salvation is a change in the state of being and that this change is a new birth to a new creature is bogus.

This wrong view of man, and consequently man's salvation, is the reason Christians contend with each other about security—whether salvation can or can't be forfeited—and wrestle with themselves about assurance. It's the fruit of the doctrines of devils originating with the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). The reformers essentially kept the RCC view of man and developed a modified version of man's salvation. Although the reformers intended to get it right, but since they were still beginning with a wrong view of man, they inevitably arrived at just another wrong view of salvation.

The faulty foundation of the RCC

Deceiving people into believing that man is an eternal non-physical or spirit being that continues to live disembodied after death was necessary for the RCC to sell indulgences. They invented a temporary place called purgatory where departed spirits are kept in limbo for a long period unless their loved ones gave financially to get them out sooner. But to round out this delusion, there had to also be two alternate places of permanent residence. There needed to be a permanent abode of bliss for the saints that bypassed purgatory altogether and for the others that finally got out. And there needed to be a permanent place of suffering for everyone else that perished. This is where the concepts of heaven and hell were introduced as man's

permanent destinies. The RCC essentially modified heaven to be not only God's residence but also man's and invented a spiritual place of suffering called hell distinct from the physical mass grave called the lake of fire (see my writing "Man and Eternal Life"). Thus, with man perceived as a non-physical being that continues to live disembodied after death in one of these three places, the stage was set for the money to begin pouring in.

The reformers were successful in protesting against the selling of indulgences and refuting the existence of purgatory. However, their efforts didn't go far enough. They still kept the same view of man along with his two permanent destinies of either heaven or hell. Consequently, they couldn't arrive at the correct view of salvation. The RCC and Protestants continue arguing today about which has the correct view of salvation. Is it faith plus works, or faith alone? The answer is neither! Though Protestants vehemently claim their teaching and preaching is "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jde 1:3), it's just "a faith" they devised from what was once delivered by the RCC.

For dust thou art

"And the LORD God **formed man of the dust of the ground**, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen 2:7). When we read the account of Adam's creation, we just assume he knew all along that he had been formed from the ground. But how could he have known? He didn't know *what* he was until God told him, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; **for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art**, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen 3:19). He learned from his Creator that he is dust. Like Adam, we also need to learn from our Creator that we are dust—mortal physical beings that were taken from the ground and will return to the ground.

Who knows better *what* we are than our Creator? He said "dust thou *art*." Who can say otherwise? That we are dust is also evident by our lives being inextricably bound to the biological system of the planet. Plants grow from the ground, animals eat the plants or each other, and we eat the plants and the animals. When the plants and animals die, their lives cease and they return to the ground. Likewise, our lives cease at death and we return to the ground to never live again unless resurrected from death.

Abraham and David both confessed that they were dust, "And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, **which am but dust and ashes**" (Gen 18:27), "For He knows our frame; He remembers that **we are dust**" (Psalm 103:14). And Jesus Christ is the Seed or Son of both, "The book of the generation of **Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham**" (Mat 1:1).

He is the Seed of Abraham: "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, **So shall thy seed be**" (Gen 15:5); "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply **thy seed** as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and **thy seed** shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in **thy seed** shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen 22:17-18); "Now to **Abraham and his seed** were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, **And to thy seed, which is Christ**" (Gal 3:16); "For verily he took not on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on *him the seed of Abraham*" (Heb 2:16).

He is the Seed of David: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up **thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels**, and I will establish his kingdom" (2Sa 7:12); "**His seed**

shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me” (Psa 89:36); “*Thou Son of David*, have mercy on us” (Mat 9:27); “Is not this **the son of David?**” (Mat 12:23); “O Lord, *thou Son of David*” (Mat 15:22); “Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, *The Son of David.*” (Mat 22:42); “That Christ cometh of **the seed of David**” (Jhn 7:42); “I have found **David the son of Jesse**, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. **Of this man’s seed** hath God according to *his* promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus” (Act 13:22-23); “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of **the seed of David** according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3); “Remember that Jesus Christ of **the seed of David** was raised from the dead according to my gospel” (2Ti 2:8).

He became a man exactly like we are: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending **his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh**, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3); “But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made **in the likeness of men**: And being found **in fashion as a man**, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phl 2:7-8); “For verily he took not on *him the nature of angels*; but he took on *him the seed of Abraham*. Wherefore **in all things** it behoved him to be **made like unto his brethren**” (Heb 2:16-17).

Since Jesus Christ became a man just like we are, and since man is dust, then He became dust. He is not some kind of dual being consisting of both non-physical and physical combined but is strictly a physical being. As a physical being His death meant that He was no longer alive but dead, and His resurrection meant that He was no longer dead but alive.

The Protestant view adopted from the RCC is that God is a Trinity of Persons and man is an eternal non-physical being living inside a body that will live forever either in heaven or hell. And to be consistent with this view of God and man, they must claim that the Son of God became a dual-being in His incarnation—both a 100% divine being and a 100% human being—an eternal non-physical being living inside a physical body. This supposed hypostatic union of two beings into one Person in the incarnation is necessary to maintain their Trinitarian view of God. Therefore, as a dual being, only the physical part of Jesus Christ died on the cross while the non-physical part was still alive, and His resurrection was simply the non-physical part re-entering the physical part. Furthermore, since His resurrection is the exemplar of man’s, this wrong view of the Savior results in a wrong view of the saved. If the Savior is an eternal non-physical being that simply re-entered His body in resurrection, then man is also an eternal non-physical being that re-enters his body at the resurrection.

The problem with this view of man as an inherently eternal being that lives forever somewhere is that it forces a redefinition of eternal life. When annihilation is denied, eternal life must be redefined because if everyone, even the unsaved, live forever then everyone by definition has eternal life. Therefore, to maintain this wrong view of man (and ultimately the RCC wrong view of God as a Trinity of Persons), an entirely fictitious concept of eternal life had to be invented. It had to be something man obtains and already has right now in this life.

Scripture is replete with teaching that eternal life isn’t something we already have but are trying to obtain: “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, **that I may have eternal life?** ... and shall **inherit everlasting life**” (Mat 19:16, 29); “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous **into life eternal**” (Mat 25:46); “Master, what shall I do **to inherit eternal life?**” (Luk 10:25); “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, **but have eternal life**. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, **but have everlasting life.**” (Jhn 3:15-16); “And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit **unto life eternal**” (Jhn 4:36); “Search the scriptures; for in them **ye think**

ye have eternal life” (Jhn 5:39); “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth **unto everlasting life**” (Jhn 6:27); “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, **may have everlasting life**” (Jhn 6:40); “And **I give unto them eternal life**; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand” (Jhn 10:28); “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it **unto life eternal**” (Jhn 12:25); “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should **give eternal life** to as many as thou hast given him” (Jhn 17:2); “To them who by patient continuance in well doing **seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life**” (Rom 2:7); “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness **unto eternal life** by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 5:21); “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and **the end everlasting life**. For the wages of sin *is* death; but **the gift of God is eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom 6:22-23); “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit **reap life everlasting**” (Gal 6:8); “for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him **to life everlasting**” (1Ti 1:16); “Fight the good fight of faith, **lay hold on eternal life**” (1Ti 6:12); “**In hope of eternal life**, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Tit 1:2); “That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to **the hope of eternal life**” (Tit 3:7); “And this is the promise that he hath **promised us, even eternal life**” (1Jo 2:25); “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ **unto eternal life**” (Jde 1:21).

In the Protestant view of man adopted from the RCC, if everyone lives eternally regardless, then eternal life can't mean living eternally. Therefore, the redefining of eternal life became necessary. But to accomplish this, it couldn't just be *life* that was redefined but also its antithesis—*death*. We understand death as the cessation of life, that when a living being is no longer alive, it's dead. However, consistency within the RCC system of the Trinity of God and the eternity of man requires a different understanding. Rather than death as “the end of life,” it was redefined as “separation” and also partitioned into multiple types—physical death (separation of the non-physical being from the physical body); spiritual death (separation from relationship with God); eternal death (eternal separation from God).

In this system of life and death, Adam was supposedly created inherently eternal and in a state of spiritual life that changed to spiritual death when he sinned, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for **in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die**” (Gen 2:17). This spiritual death state of being was consequently passed down to his descendants, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so **death passed upon all men**, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12). Although man is still inherently eternal as he was created, but because of Adam's sin everyone is born in a state of spiritual death that must change to spiritual life to have eternal life in heaven with God.

In this view of salvation, since everyone lives eternally whether or not they're saved, the distinction between the saved and unsaved is if they're spiritually alive or spiritually dead. Therefore, salvation is a change from a state of spiritual death to spiritual life as a new creature by a second birth. Those that have been born again will live forever with God in heaven, while those that didn't experience the new birth will be burned alive forever in hell. But this view of salvation is wrong because it's necessitated by a wrong view of man.

Are we born again as new creatures?

The teaching that salvation is a new birth from spiritual death to spiritual life as a new creature is based upon the false assumption that man is an eternal non-physical being living inside a physical body. With this view of

man, the new birth is understood as a re-birth of a supposed inner being. But if the correct view of man is that he is a physical being, that he is dust, then there's nothing inside to be reborn! The new birth of an inner being into a new creature is simply a false concept concocted to proof-text and support a false view of man and his salvation.

Jesus was speaking to the Pharisee Nicodemus when He taught, "Except a man be **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jhn 3:3). And John emphasized on three different occasions that Nicodemus had come to Jesus by night, "The same came to Jesus by night" (Jhn 3:2), "he that came to Jesus by night" (Jhn 7:50), "which at the first came to Jesus by night" (Jhn 19:39). This must have been important to repeat it. Like Gideon, it seems Nicodemus feared man more than God, "Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, **because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city**, that he could not do *it* by day, **that he did *it* by night**" (Jdg 6:27). But Jesus explained to him that he must be "**born of water and of the Spirit [Breath]**" (Jhn 3:5). He must be baptized in water where he would no longer be ashamed but make a public confession of Jesus Christ in broad daylight for everyone to witness.

He went on to explain the new birth with an analogy, "That which is **born of the flesh is flesh**; that which is **born of the Spirit [Breath] is spirit [breath]**" (Jhn 3:6). All creatures "born of the flesh," are of the same flesh from which they were born—horses have horses, and dolphins have dolphins. This is also what Paul taught about the resurrection, "All flesh *is* not the same flesh: but *there is* one **kind of flesh of men**, another **flesh of beasts**, another **of fishes**, and another **of birds**" (1Co 15:39). Since the only way to get a horse is from a horse, the correlation of "born of the Spirit [Breath] is spirit [breath]," is that the only way to get eternal life is from someone else that has eternal life, "I am the resurrection, and the life" (Jhn 11:25), "because I live, ye shall live also" (Jhn 14:19); "in Christ shall all be made alive" (1Co 15:22). We'll be raised to eternal life by the same Breath that raised Christ, "But if **the Spirit [Breath]** of him that **raised up Jesus from the dead** dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead **shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit [Breath]** that dwelleth in you" (Rom 8:11). The new birth, therefore, isn't some kind of internal change from spiritual death to spiritual life, but resurrection from death to eternal life.

In Paul's statement, "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, ***he is* a new creature**: old things are **passed away**; behold, all things are **become new**" (2Co 5:17), the words "*he is*" are italicized indicating they're not in the Greek text but added by the translators with the intent of clarifying what was being said. However, this is simply a case of bias and imposing upon the Scriptures something Paul didn't say. Because the view of the translators was that man is a non-physical being that becomes spiritually alive to a saved state at conversion, they understood this statement to be describing man transformed into some kind of a new creation. However, it's not about man but about the creation itself being renewed from the curse.

Jesus Christ later revealed to John, "And I saw **a new heaven and a new earth**: for the first heaven and the first earth were **passed away**; and there was no more sea ... And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more **death**, neither **sorrow**, nor **crying**, neither shall there be any more **pain**: for the former things are **passed away**" (Rev 21:1, 4). The "old things are passed away" are death, sorrow, crying, and pain, while the "all things are become new" are the renewed heavens and earth.

Eternal life means no more death

We must begin with a correct view of man to be in a position to apprehend a correct understanding of man's salvation. Since man is a physical being, he's no longer alive when he dies. Life and death are quite simple and easy to understand. When living beings die, including human beings, they're no longer alive. Therefore, we don't have eternal life right now because we all will die and no longer be alive. Death is the cessation of life, and eternal life is living perpetually without ever dying again.

Paul defined eternal life in Romans, "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto **eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord** ... Knowing that **Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more**; death hath no more dominion over him ... For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* **eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Rom 5:21, 6:9, 23). Jesus Christ died but was raised from the dead to never die again. This is eternal life! He said of Himself, "**I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore**" (Rev 1:18).

Many times we're told that there will come a day when there is no more death: "**He will swallow up death in victory**; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isa 25:8); "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; **I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues**" (Hos 13:14); "**Neither can they die any more**: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luk 20:36); "The last enemy *that* shall be **destroyed is death**" (1Co 15:26); "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **Death is swallowed up in victory**" (1Co 15:54); "For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that **mortality might be swallowed up of life**" (2Co 5:4); "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath **abolished death**, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2Ti 1:10); "that through death he might **destroy him that had the power of death**, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through **fear of death** were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb 2:14-15); "He that overcometh **shall not be hurt of the second death**" (Rev 2:11); "Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such **the second death hath no power**" (Rev 20:6); "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and **there shall be no more death**" (Rev 21:4).

Eternal life is no more death. It's living perpetually without fear of ever dying again. And this correct view of eternal life comes from the correct view of man, "for dust thou *art*" (Gen 3:19).

Death from the beginning

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, **till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return**" (Gen 3:19). Adam's life began from the ground and ended by returning to the ground. Returning to the ground meant that he would no longer be alive because he wasn't already alive before being created from the ground. This is how life and death were defined from the beginning and this is also what Paul taught:

Wherefore, as **by one man** sin entered into the world, and **death by sin; and so death passed upon all men**, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not

imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from **Adam** to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of **Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come**. But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through **the offence of one many be dead**, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by **one man, Jesus Christ**, hath abounded unto many. And not as *it was* by **one that sinned**, so *is* the gift: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification. For if **by one man's offence death reigned by one**; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall **reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.** (Romans 5:12-17)

In the view that man is an eternal non-physical being, this passage must be understood that it was some type of spiritual death that passed upon mankind as the result of Adam's sin. Therefore, the corollary is that Jesus Christ saved us from spiritual death. But Paul drew this same parallel between Adam and Christ when writing to the Christians in Corinth about the resurrection from death, "For since **by man came death**, by man *came* also **the resurrection of the dead**. For as **in Adam all die**, even so **in Christ shall all be made alive**" (1Co 15:21-22). It's not some abstract concept of spiritual death that Christ saved us from, but the *only* type of death there is—returning to the ground. And it's within this context and understanding of life and death that Paul defined eternal life, "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto **eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord** ... Knowing that **Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more**; death hath no more dominion over him ... For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* **eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Rom 5:21, 6:9, 23). Christ saved us from death that passed upon us from Adam—returning to the ground from which we were taken.

The dead that take part in the first resurrection when Christ returns will not die a second time, "Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in **the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power**, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev 20:6). They will have eternal life at this point because they will never die again. It will be after the millennium that the entire creation itself will be renewed from the curse of death pronounced upon it, "And I saw **a new heaven and a new earth**: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea ... And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and **there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain**: for the former things are passed away" (Rev 21:1, 4).

Salvation is future

Salvation is simply deliverance or rescue from danger or peril. The Greek noun *soteria* for "salvation" and verb *sozo* for "save," are used in the New Testament for deliverance from various afflictions such as sickness, demon possession, drowning, and deliverance from enemies, slavery, and prison: "Lord, **save [sozo]** us: we perish" (Mat 8:25); "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath **made thee whole [sozo]**" (Mat 9:22); "He **saved [sozo]** others; himself he cannot **save [sozo]**" (Mat 27:42); "and as many as touched him were **made whole [sozo]**" (Mar 6:56); "That we should be **saved [soteria]** from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us" (Luk 1:71); "Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to **save [sozo]** life, or to destroy *it*?" (Luk 6:9); "They also which saw *it* told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was **healed [sozo]**" (Luk 8:36); "And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath **saved [sozo]** thee" (Luk 18:42); "For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would **deliver [soteria]** them" (Act 7:25); "Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat: for this is for your **health [soteria]**: for

there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you” (Act 27:34); “For I know that this shall turn to my **salvation [soteria]** through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phl 1:19).

When used for the salvation we have in Christ, *sozo* and *soteria* mean deliverance from death. Since we’re delivered from death at the resurrection, then that’s the point we’ll be saved. It’s not Scripturally correct to call ourselves “saved” right now because we all still die. Salvation isn’t an internal change that happens in this life, but the event of deliverance from death when Christ returns.

And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: **The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood**, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: **And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.** (Acts 2:19-21)

Peter preached the first evangelistic sermon and started by quoting from the prophet Joel about our future salvation. Our salvation “shall come to pass” after the sun is turned to darkness and the moon to blood. Since the sun hasn’t turned to darkness or the moon to blood, then none of us are saved yet. He wasn’t teaching that we’re saved the moment we call on the name of the Lord, but rather that it’s those that call on the name of the Lord that shall be saved when the Lord returns. These end-time events must transpire before the event of our salvation from the dead is consummated. And this very first evangelistic salvation message set the precedence for the correct view of salvation ever since. Paul quoted the same prophecy of Joel concerning salvation:

For with the heart man **believeth [is being trusted] unto righteousness**; and with the mouth **confession is made [is being confessed] unto salvation**. For the scripture saith, **Whosoever believeth [trusting] on him shall not be ashamed [kataischyno]**. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that **call [calling]** upon him. **For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.** (Romans 10:10-13)

The verbs in this passage are present-continuous, “is being trusted,” “is being confessed,” “trusting,” and “calling.” Paul was indicating that we continually trust and call upon the Lord until the day we’re finally saved, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom 10:13). The Greek *kataischyno* in his quote from Isaiah, “Whosoever believeth [trusting] on him shall not be **ashamed [kataischyno]**,” means “to put to shame,” “to disappoint,” or “to let down.” He was saying that those trusting in Him for salvation from death will not be put to shame, disappointed, or let down. Salvation is the resurrection where our hope of eternal life will not be disappointed or let down.

Earlier in Romans, Paul said that the redemption of the body is our hope of salvation, “And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, **the redemption of our body. For we are saved [sozo] by hope**: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Rom 8:23-24). Later he will say, “And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for **now is our salvation nearer than when we believed [trusted]**” (Rom 13:11). It’s not that we became “saved” the moment we trusted God, but rather that we’re trusting God until the day we’re saved. Though our salvation is in the future, it’s drawing nearer every day. Peter also taught that the salvation of our souls will be at the return of Christ:

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory **at the appearing of Jesus Christ**: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing [*trusting*], ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith [*faithfulness*], *even* **the salvation of your souls**. (1Pe 1:7-9)

The writer of Hebrews said the same, “And as it is **appointed unto men once to die**, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him **shall he appear** the second time without sin **unto salvation**” (Heb 9:27-28). Salvation from our appointment with death will be at Christ’s appearing. And when were we appointed to die? It was at the time of the curse, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, **till thou return unto the ground**; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, **and unto dust shalt thou return**” (Gen 3:19). He had taught earlier that this salvation will be in the world to come when all things are finally put under Christ’s feet:

How shall we escape, if we neglect **so great salvation**; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection **the world to come, whereof we speak**. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: **Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet**. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing *that is* not put under him. **But now we see not yet all things put under him**. (Hebrews 2:3-8)

Paul told the Corinthians that it will be at the resurrection when all things are put under Christ’s feet, “For he must reign, till he hath **put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death**.” (1Co 15:25-26). Our salvation, therefore, will be at the resurrection when death is forever put beneath our feet through Christ. Paul also taught this to the Ephesians, “**That in the ages to come** he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. **For by grace are ye saved through faith**” (Ephesians 2:7-9). He placed our salvation at the time of “the ages to come.”

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which **have no hope**. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto **the coming of the Lord** shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: **and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air**: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. ... But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; **and for an helmet, the hope of salvation**. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to **obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ**, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 5:8-10)

Paul taught the Thessalonians that salvation is what we hope to obtain when the Lord returns. When the Lord comes, the dead in Christ will be raised first and those alive will be caught up together with them. The helmet of salvation, “And take the helmet of salvation” (Eph 6:17), “and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (1Th 5:8), is our hope of salvation from death at Christ’s return. It’s the heads of the devil’s children that will be bruised because they’re not wearing the helmet, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between **thy seed** and her seed; **it shall bruise thy head**, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen 3:15).

We need forgiveness of sins and salvation from death

Everyone has sinned against God: “For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecc 7:20); “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23); “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin” (Gal 3:22); “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1Jo 1:8).

Christ’s death on the cross paid the penalty for our sins: “But he *was* **wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities**: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5); “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to **give his life a ransom for many**” (Mat 20:28); “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold **the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world**” (Jhn 1:29); “Who was **delivered for our offences**, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom 4:25); “For when we were yet without strength, in due time **Christ died for the ungodly**” (Rom 5:6); “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ died for our sins** according to the scriptures” (1Co 15:3); “For he hath **made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin**; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21); “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath **given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God** for a sweetsmelling savour” (Eph 5:2); “So **Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many**; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb 9:28); “By the which will **we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**” (Heb 10:10); “Who his own self **bare our sins in his own body on the tree**, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1Pe 2:24).

Scripture is consistent from beginning to ending that death—not living eternally in a place of fire—is the penalty for our sins: “for in the day that thou eatest thereof **thou shalt surely die**” (Gen 2:17); “every man shall be **put to death for his own sin**” (Deu 24:16); “but every man shall **die for his own sin**” (2Ch 25:4); “**he shall die**: because thou hast not given him warning, **he shall die in his sin**” (Eze 3:20); “the soul that **sinneth, it shall die**” (Eze 18:4, 20); “I said therefore unto you, that **ye shall die in your sins**: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, **ye shall die in your sins**” (Jhn 8:24); “and **death by sin**; and so death passed upon all men, for that **all have sinned**” (Rom 5:12); “That as **sin hath reigned unto death**” (Rom 5:21); “For the **wages of sin is death**” (Rom 6:23); “**The sting of death is sin**; and the strength of sin *is* the law” (1Co 15:56); “For if ye **live after the flesh, ye shall die**” (Rom 8:13); “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and **sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death**” (Jas 1:15); “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is **the second death.**” (Rev 20:14); “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is **the second death.**” (Rev 21:8).

Christ's resurrection from the dead and His return to raise the dead is our victory over death: "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, **may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day**" (Jhn 6:40); "As the living Father hath sent me, and **I live by the Father:** so he that eateth me, even **he shall live by me**" (Jhn 6:57); "**I am the resurrection, and the life:** he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (Jhn 11:25); "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: **because I live, ye shall live also**" (Jhn 14:19); "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, **he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies** by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom 8:11); "And God hath both **raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us** by his own power" (1Co 6:14); "For as in Adam all die, even so **in Christ shall all be made alive.** But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward **they that are Christ's at his coming.**" (1Co 15:22-23); "**O death,** where *is* thy sting? **O grave,** where *is* thy victory? The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, which **giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**" (1Co 15:55-57); "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall **raise up us also by Jesus,** and shall present *us* with you" (2Co 4:14); "**For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven** with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and **the dead in Christ shall rise first**" (1Th 4:16).

Salvation consists of two separate events: (1) forgiveness of our sins to be in a right relationship with God now, (2) obtaining eternal life at Christ's return. But the Protestant view conflates the two—that salvation is forgiveness of our sins to be in a right relationship with God now and also obtaining eternal life by an internal change from spiritual death to spiritual life now. It's this false view of man and salvation that's the cause for the confusion and false teaching about eternal security and assurance.

Our sins separated us from God

Our sins severed our relationship with God and made us His enemies: "And **I will surely hide my face** in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods" (Deu 31:18); "And he said, **I will hide my face from them,** I will see what their end *shall be:* for they *are* a very froward generation, children in whom *is* no faith" (Deu 32:20); "**The LORD is far from the wicked:** but he heareth the prayer of the righteous" (Pro 15:29); "But your iniquities have **separated between you and your God,** and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa 59:2); "Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but **he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them** at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings" (Mic 3:4); "For if, **when we were enemies,** we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom 5:10); "Because the carnal mind *is* **enmity against God:** for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom 8:7); "And you, that were sometime **alienated and enemies** in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Col 1:21); "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is **enmity with God?** whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jas 4:4).

Because our sins are against Him, it's His prerogative to decide how our relationship with Him can be reconciled. We're not in any position to "call the shots" so to speak and decide how we can be made right with Him again. He provided the only way of restoring that relationship and it's through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ. The Lamb that He provided, "God will provide for himself a lamb" (Gen 22:8), "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jhn 1:29), is the only sacrifice He will accept. This is why there's only one way of salvation.

We're forgiven now and have peace with God

God forgives our sins: “and it shall be forgiven” (Lev 4:20, 26, 31, 35; Lev 5:10, 13, 16, 18; Lev 6:7); “Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now” (Num 14:19); “and it shall be forgiven” (Num 15:25, 26); “Blessed *is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered*” (Psa 32:1); “Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities” (Psa 51:9); “Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin” (Psa 85:2); “But *there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared*” (Psa 130:4); “Who *is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy*” (Mic 7:18); “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mat 9:2); “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mar 2:5); “Man, thy sins are forgiven thee” (Luk 5:20); “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven” (Luk 7:47); “to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Act 5:31); “through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins” (Act 13:38); “that they may receive forgiveness of sins” (Act 26:18); “Blessed *are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered*” (Rom 4:7); “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph 1:7); “God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph 4:32); “In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even the forgiveness of sins*” (Col 1:14); “having forgiven you all trespasses” (Col 2:13); “and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him” (Jam 5:15); “your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake” (1Jo 2:12); “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev 1:5).

God reconciled us to Himself through His Son Jesus Christ: “**we have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1); “For if, when we were enemies, **we were reconciled to God** by the death of his Son, much more, **being reconciled**, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom 5:10); “And all things *are* of God, who hath **reconciled us to himself** by Jesus Christ” (2Co 5:18); “And that he might **reconcile both unto God** in one body by the cross” (Eph 2:16); “And, **having made peace** through the blood of his cross, by him to **reconcile all things unto himself**” (Col 1:20); “to **make reconciliation** for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17); “Grace be with you, mercy, **and peace, from God the Father**, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love” (2Jo 1:3).

Faithfulness and trust

The Hebrew noun *emwnah* in the famous statement “but the just shall live by his **faith [emwnah]**” (Hab 2:4), means “faithfulness” not “faith” as it’s translated. Several Bible versions, however, render it correctly: Complete Jewish Bible, God’s Word, Lexham English Bible, Names of God Bible, New English Translation, New International Version, New Living Translation, and The Voice. Habakkuk’s statement, of course, was quoted three times in the New Testament, “The just shall live by **faith [pistis]**” (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38), and was instrumental in Martin Luther’s protest against the RCC in the Protestant Reformation.

The Greek noun *pistis* in “The just shall live by **faith [pistis]**,” appears almost 250 times in the New Testament and is always translated as “faith” in the King James Version except in just three places where the contexts forced it to be rendered “faithfulness” or “fidelity” (Rom 3:3; Gal 5:22; Tit 2:10). Likewise, its verb form *pisteuo* also appears almost 250 times and is almost always translated “believe” except in just a few places where the contexts forced it to be rendered “trust” or “commit” (Luk 16:11; Gal 2:7; 1Th 2:4; 1Ti 1:11; Tit 1:3).

The point is that in almost 500 occurrences—other than a few times when the contexts forced the meaning of faithfulness or trust—the translators took the liberty of rendering *pistis* as “faith” and *pisteuo* as “believe.” But why? It’s because of an erroneous view of salvation based on a false view of man. Since Luther continued to embrace a wrong view of man as taught by the RCC, his effort to attain the right view of salvation was doomed to failure from the beginning. His faulty conclusion was that “The just shall live by faith [*pistis*]” means salvation is by faith or belief.

In the view that man is already inherently eternal, salvation cannot be living eternally but must be something else. That something else is an internal change from spiritual death to spiritual life. Rather than hoping to have eternal life at Christ’s return to raise the dead, eternal life is a change in the state of being before death—that we have salvation now and faith or belief is the criterion for having it.

In this mainstream Protestant Christian view, we’re saved simply by believing some facts about Jesus Christ are true, and even call ourselves “believers” in distinction from the unsaved. Salvation has essentially been dwindled-down to a formula—do ‘A’ to have ‘B.’ All we must do is make a faith-confession and we’re now saved, “That if thou shalt **confess with thy mouth** the Lord Jesus, and shalt **believe [trust] in thine heart** that God hath raised him from the dead, **thou shalt be saved**” (Rom 10:9).

Since faith is the criterion for salvation in this view, then faith must be the security and assurance of salvation. If we’ve done ‘A,’ then we have ‘B.’ If we doubt having ‘B,’ we just remind ourselves of having done ‘A.’ And since God does ‘B,’ then we can’t lose ‘B’ if we’ve done ‘A.’ The formula is simple and convenient. But the problem arises about those that did ‘A’ but no longer have ‘B.’ What about them? In response, the concepts of “believing in the heart” versus “mental assent,” or “heart faith” versus “head faith” were contrived. Though it seemed they did ‘A,’ they didn’t, therefore never had ‘B.’ Those that believed all along never did, therefore they never were saved.

The problem with this view of salvation by faith is that it’s based on the false assumption that man is an eternal non-physical being. Therefore, salvation consists of a change in the state of being and whether or not we’ve truly had that change. It’s more focused on the saved than the Savior—who we are, what we have, and what we can do, rather than who He is, what He has, and what He can do. And assurance of this salvation comes by affirming who we are: “I’m a believer,” “I’m born again,” “I’m a new creature,” and “I’m the righteousness of God in Christ.” But the salvation taught in the Scriptures isn’t a change in *who* we are but *whose* we are!

It’s not *who* we are but *whose* we are

The theme of the apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is the *mysterion* or mystery. It’s about the saving gospel message of Jesus Christ that had been hidden by God within the narrative of the creation account itself but was now made known: “Having **made known** unto us **the mystery [mysterion]** of his will” (Eph 1:9), “How that by revelation he **made known** unto me **the mystery [mysterion]**; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in **the mystery [mysterion] of Christ**)” (Eph 3:3-4), “the fellowship of **the mystery [mysterion]**, which from **the beginning of the world** hath been **hid in God**, who **created** all things by Jesus Christ” (Eph 3:9), “This is a **great mystery [mysterion]**: but I speak concerning **Christ and the church**” (Eph 5:32), “to **make known** the mystery [*mysterion*] of the gospel” (Eph 6:19).

The hidden message within the creation that Paul featured in Ephesians is the Lordship of Jesus Christ shown figuratively within the heavens, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings **in heavenly [epouranios] places in Christ**” (Eph 1:3). God created light and called it “Day” and the darkness “Night,” “And God **called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night**” (Gen 1:5). He then set two great lights in the heavens to rule over one or the other, “Let there be **lights** in the firmament of **the heaven** ... And God made two great lights; **the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night**” (Gen 1:14, 16). The mystery that was “made known” to Paul was that this represented our transition from one ruler to another, “For **ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord**: walk as children of light” (Eph 5:8).

The Greater Light in the *epouranios* or heavenly is the Lord Jesus Christ represented by the sun during the day, while the lesser light is the devil represented by the moon during the night, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of **the devil**. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against **the rulers of the darkness of this world**, against spiritual wickedness **in high [epouranios] places**” (Eph 6:11-12).

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, **(by grace ye are saved;)** And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us sit together in heavenly [epouranios] places in Christ Jesus*: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For **by grace are ye saved through faith [faithfulness]**; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:5-9)

Now we can understand what Paul meant in this passage by “saved through faith [faithfulness]” (Eph 2:8). He wasn’t saying that we’re saved by our faith, but by Christ’s faithfulness! This is what he will reiterate a little later, “To the intent that now unto **the principalities and powers in heavenly [epouranios] places** might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in **Christ Jesus our Lord**: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence **by the faith [faithfulness] of him**” (Eph 3:10-12), “because of **Christ’s faithfulness**” (Eph 3:12 NET).

It’s because Christ was faithful to His Father in shedding His precious blood for our sins, “In whom we have redemption **through his blood, the forgiveness of sins**, according to the riches of **his grace**” (Eph 1:7), that the Father raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly, “And hath **raised us up together**, and made *us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*” (Eph 2:6). And when we submit to Him as our Lord and Ruler, He represents us at the Father’s right hand as though we were seated there ourselves! This is the gospel message of salvation. This is the “mystery [*mysterion*] of the gospel” (Eph 6:19), as Paul concluded his letter. It’s Christ’s faithfulness to die for our sins, and our faithfulness to now serve Him as Lord—the Greater Light ruling the Day.

It’s not a change *in us*, but a change *of us*. It’s a change *from out of* one lordship or kingdom *into* another: “to turn *them* **from darkness to light**, and **from the power of Satan unto God**” (Act 26:18); “Who hath delivered **us from the power of darkness**, and hath **translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son**” (Col 1:13); “shew forth the praises of him who hath called you **out of darkness into his marvellous light**” (1Pe 2:9). Salvation isn’t an internal change of being but a positional change in standing.

The problem isn't that we're spiritually dead with some kind of sinful nature within us that must be changed. The problem is that we need a change in ruler over us. Because we've all sinned against God, we're all under the lordship of the devil unless we submit ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. We're not autonomous beings, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (Rom 14:7).

Salvation is belonging to Jesus Christ and being known by Him: "For I know him" (Gen 18:19); "I never knew you" (Mat 7:23); "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them" (Jhn 10:27); "And all mine are thine" (Jhn 17:10); "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom 8:9); "And ye are Christ's" (1Co 3:23); "But if any man love God, the same is known of him" (1Co 8:3); "they that are Christ's" (1Co 15:23); "as he *is* Christ's, even so *are* we Christ's" (2Co 10:7); "And if ye *be* Christ's" (Gal 3:29); "ye have known God, or rather are known of God" (Gal 4:9); "they that are Christ's" (Gal 5:24); "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2Ti 2:19).

Salvation from death at Christ's return comes to those that belong to Him and go to their deaths in faithful service to Him: "whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom 14:8); "fallen asleep in Christ" (1Co 15:18); "in Christ shall all be made alive" (1Co 15:22); "they that are Christ's at his coming" (1Co 15:23), "the dead in Christ" (1Th 4:16); "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus" (2Ti 1:1); "These all died in faith [*faithfulness*]" (Heb 11:13); "be thou faithful unto death" (Rev 2:10); "the dead which die in the Lord" (Rev 14:13).

Many times Paul used variations of the terms "in Christ," "in him," or "in whom" to express the concept of salvation as belonging to Jesus Christ. He used these terms about a dozen times in the first two chapters of Ephesians alone. Salvation isn't a change of nature within us, but a change of position into Him. The only *nature* we have is human nature because we're dust! Being "in him" is safety, security, and salvation.

Confessing the Lord Jesus

"That if thou shalt **confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus**, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, **thou shalt be saved**" (Rom 10:9). Confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus isn't some kind of magic formula that takes us from point 'A' to 'B,' that instantly changes us internally into a saved state of being. It's a public confession of our commitment to faithfully serve Jesus Christ as Lord and obey everything He commanded. Understanding this statement within context, Paul had just quoted these words from Moses concerning Jesus Christ:

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it *is* not hidden from thee, neither *is* it far off. It *is* not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, **that we may hear it, and do it?** Neither *is* it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, **that we may hear it, and do it?** But the word *is* very nigh unto thee, **in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.** (Deuteronomy 30:11-14)

God was taking away all excuses from His people for disobedience. Earlier Moses had given them instructions for what they were to do once they crossed the Jordan, "And it shall be on the day when ye shall **pass over Jordan** unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Deu 27:2), "**These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people**, when ye are **come over Jordan**; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and

Joseph, and Benjamin: **And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse;** Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali” (Deu 27:12-13). After the reading of all the blessings and curses the people were to affirm they had understood the consequences for not keeping the commandments, “Cursed *be* he that confirmeth not *all* the words of this law to do them. **And all the people shall say, Amen.**” (Deu 27:26). And this is what they did under Joshua’s leadership, “And afterward he read all the words of the law, **the blessings and cursings,** according to all that is written in the book of the law” (Jos 8:34).

By making His people affirm “Amen” out of their own mouths that they had heard His commandments and understood the consequences for not keeping them, they would be left without excuse. It’s similar to waiver agreements we sign today releasing liability from another party—it puts the responsibility back on us. His people wouldn’t be able to say later, “You never told us,” “You didn’t make it clear,” “Your commandments were out of our reach.” The bottom line was, “But the word *is* very nigh unto thee, **in thy mouth, and in thy heart,** that thou mayest **do it**” (Deu 30:14).

Paul taught that all of this was prophetic of what God would do through His Son Jesus Christ, “Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to **bring Christ down from above:**) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to **bring up Christ again from the dead.**)” (Rom 10:6-7). This statement covers the gamut of Christ’s mission to mankind on the earth—His incarnation to His resurrection. He is our example of faithfulness and He also takes away all excuses from us—because He was faithful, we must be faithful. We’re to have His same mindset and go to our deaths in faithfulness, “**Let this mind be in you,** which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phl 2:5), “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became **obedient unto death,** even the death of the cross” (Phl 2:8).

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were **baptized into his death?** Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that **like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so** we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:3-4). To be baptized or immersed into His death means that baptism is committing ourselves to die as He did. It doesn’t mean necessarily that we will be put to death but simply that we will suffer after the same image—being falsely accused, maligned, and reproached. God the Father raised His Son from the dead because His death glorified Him, “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; **glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee**” (Jhn 17:1). Likewise, we’ll be raised from the dead if we go to our deaths glorifying His Son. This is what it means to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phl 2:12). It certainly doesn’t mean that we save ourselves. It’s that our salvation from death is patterned after His by having the same mindset as Him.

Circling back to Romans, Paul drew this conclusion, “So then **faith [faithfulness] cometh by hearing,** and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). Hearing about Christ’s faithfulness to His Father—that He came down from heaven, always did His Father’s will, went to His death in obedience, then was raised from the dead—this hearing came by the apostles being sent by Him to preach, “the word of faith [faithfulness], which we preach” (Rom 10:8), “And how shall they preach, except they be sent?” (Rom 10:15).

Now, we can’t make excuses, “that we may hear it, and do it?” (Deu 30:12, 13). When we “confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus” (Rom 10:9), the word is “**in thy mouth,** and in thy heart, that thou mayest **do it**” (Deu 30:14). Salvation consists of affirming from our mouths that we’ve heard of Christ’s faithfulness and we’ve heard His commandments. We’re now committed to faithfully serve Him as our Lord unto death. We’ve heard it and we’ll do it.

Repentance in baptism is the prescribed point of conversion

Jesus preached repentance: “**Repent ye:** for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat 3:2); “From that time **Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent:** for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat 4:17); “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: **repent ye,** and believe the gospel” (Mar 1:15); “I came not to call the righteous, but **sinner to repentance**” (Luk 5:32); “I tell you, Nay: but, **except ye repent,** ye shall all likewise perish” (Luk 13:3).

He commanded repentance and water baptism, “And that **repentance and remission of sins** should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luk 24:47), “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: **Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:** and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Mat 28:19-20). He didn’t command an altar call, a sinner’s prayer, or a faith-confession but repentance and baptism.

In conclusion of the very first evangelistic sermon, Peter told his hearers to repent of their sins and be baptized, “Then Peter said unto them, **Repent, and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**” (Act 2:38). He said nothing about believing or having faith. Of course believing is certainly involved, but conversion to Christianity isn’t about going from unbeliever to believer but unforgiven to forgiven. Peter’s second sermon recorded in Scripture was also about repentance and forgiveness of sins, “**Repent** ye therefore, and **be converted, that your sins may be blotted out**” (Act 3:19). Conversion isn’t about becoming a believer but becoming forgiven. And he continued to preach and teach repentance and forgiveness, “Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for **to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins**” (Act 5:31), “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that **any should perish, but that all should come to repentance**” (2Pe 3:9). According to Peter, repentance is the point of conversion, not believing.

Paul also preached and taught repentance: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now **commandeth all men every where to repent**” (Act 17:30); “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, **repentance toward God,** and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21); “But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should **repent and turn to God,** and do works meet for **repentance**” (Act 26:20); “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that **the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?**” (Rom 2:4).

Conversion isn’t an internal change from spiritual death to spiritual life, but a change in relationship—from an enemy of God to right with Him. The Greek *dikaio syne*, translated throughout the New Testament “righteousness,” denotes a right relationship with God. And to be right with Him, our sins must first be forgiven, “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom **God imputeth righteousness** without works, *Saying,* Blessed *are* they whose **iniquities are forgiven,** and whose **sins are covered.** Blessed *is* the man to whom **the Lord will not impute sin.**” (Rom 4:6-8). God imputes or counts us right with Him when He no longer imputes or counts our sins against us. Thus, conversion is repenting of our sins and being forgiven by God on account of the shed blood of His Son Jesus Christ. We’re not saved at this point but only

forgiven of our sins and in a right relationship with Him. Our salvation from death will come later when Christ returns to raise the dead.

Baptism is the turning point from a life of sin to a life of obedience to the commandments of Jesus Christ as Lord, “Go ye therefore, and **teach all nations, baptizing them** in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: **Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you**” (Mat 28:19-20). Paul also taught that baptism is the point at which we obey from our hearts the teachings of Jesus Christ, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were **baptized into Jesus Christ** were baptized into his death?” (Rom 6:3), “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have **obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine** which was delivered you” (Rom 6:17).

Being baptized into Christ

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were **baptized into Jesus Christ** were baptized into his death?” (Rom 6:3), “**But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*” (Rom 13:14), “For ye are all the children of God **by faith [faithfulness] in Christ Jesus**. For as many of you as have been **baptized into Christ have put on Christ.**” (Gal 3:26-27). Baptism “into Christ” means that we repent of our sins and commit ourselves to faithfully serve Him. And when we’re living faithfully to Him, He clothes the shame of our nakedness, “And the eyes of them both were opened, and **they knew that they were naked**; and they sewed fig leaves together, and **made themselves aprons**” (Gen 3:7), “Unto Adam also and to his wife did **the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them**” (Gen 3:21).

Baptism is our commitment to live as He did and die as He did, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were **baptized into his death?**” (Rom 6:3). And the Lord’s Supper is the continued reminder of our commitment, “For by **one Spirit [Breath]** are we all **baptized into one body**, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to **drink into one Spirit [Breath]**” (1Co 12:13), “For as often as ye **eat this bread, and drink this cup**, ye do shew **the Lord’s death till he come**” (1Co 11:26), “O my Father, if it be possible, **let this cup pass from me**: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt* ... O my Father, if **this cup** may not pass away from me, **except I drink it, thy will be done**” (Mat 26:39, 42).

Peter said that Noah’s flood was figurative and prophetic of water baptism, “Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited **in the days of Noah**, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. **The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us** (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of **a good conscience toward God**,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 3:20-21). Before baptism, the imaginations and thoughts of our hearts were evil, “**And GOD saw** that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Gen 6:5). Baptism is the turning point where we purify the imaginations and thoughts of our hearts in His sight, “Blessed *are* the **pure in heart**: for they shall see God” (Mat 5:8), “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already **in his heart**” (Mat 5:28). We commit ourselves to serve Jesus Christ with a good conscience toward Him recognizing that He sees everything.

Earlier Peter wrote that having a good conscience toward God means that we suffer wrongfully knowing that He sees it and will justify us, “For this *is* thankworthy, if a man for **conscience toward God** endure grief, **suffering wrongfully**” (1Pe 2:19). It’s following the example of Christ’s suffering, “For even hereunto were ye

called: because Christ also suffered for us, **leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:** Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but **committed himself to him that judgeth righteously**” (1Pe 2:21-23). When falsely accused, He didn’t open His mouth in His defense but trusted His Father and committed His defense to Him. This is what Peter meant by “baptism doth also now save us ... a good conscience toward God” (1Pe 3:21).

Jesus Christ died as a convicted criminal yet never tried to defend Himself. And before He breathed His last breath, He committed His life into His Father’s hands, “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, **into thy hands I commend my spirit [breath]**: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost [*exhaled*]” (Luk 23:46). Isaiah prophesied that He would commit to His Father the vindication of His wrongful execution, “**He is near that justifieth me;** who will contend with me? let us stand together: who *is* mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, **the Lord GOD will help me;** who *is* he *that* shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.” (Isa 50:8-9). As He committed His breath to His Father, we also commit our breath to Him, “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, **Lord Jesus, receive my spirit [breath]**” (Act 7:59).

It’s because we’re dust—physical beings animated by God breathing into us—that salvation is having life breathed back into us at the first resurrection. Because the “saved” are dust, the Savior had to become dust. He had to become just like we are, so we could become just like He is. Paul taught a parallel between our initial creation to life and our subsequent resurrection to life, “The first man Adam was made **a living soul;** the last Adam *was made a quickening spirit [breath]*” (1Co 15:45). As the first Adam was raised from the dust and quickened by God’s Breath, we’ll be raised from the dust and quickened by God’s Breath at the return of the last Adam.

Christ trusted His Father to breathe life back into Him, and we also trust, “We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, **I believed [trusted],** and therefore have I spoken; **we also believe [trust],** and therefore speak; Knowing that he which **raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus,** and shall present *us* with you” (2Co 4:13-14). He spoke His trust in His Father to breathe life back into Him, “Father, **into thy hands I commend my spirit [breath]**: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost [*exhaled*]” (Luk 23:46). To be raised after the likeness of His resurrection, we must also be conformed to the likeness of His death, “became obedient unto death, **even the death of the cross**” (Phl 2:8), “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and **the fellowship of his sufferings,** being made **conformable unto his death;** If by any means I might **attain unto the resurrection of the dead**” (Phl 3:10-11).

Water baptism itself only gets us wet. It’s simply a tangible act or event that serves as the turning point of our lives. It’s not getting wet that saves us but what we do after getting dried off. The commitment of faithful service to the Lord that we make in baptism isn’t what saves us, but it’s the fulfillment of that commitment through a life of faithful service to the Lord that does.

Paul likened this turning point as though we’re now a completely new person from the old person we used to be: “Knowing this, that **our old man is crucified with him,** that the body of sin might be destroyed, that **henceforth we should not serve sin**” (Rom 6:6); “That ye **put off concerning the former conversation the old man,** which is corrupt according to the **deceitful lusts;** And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye **put on the new man,** which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:22-24); “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have **put off the old man with his deeds;** And have **put on the new man,** which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col 3:9-10). But nothing changes in our

state of being. We're still the same dust! What changes is that we now have God's Breath in our hearts giving us the strength to turn from a life of sin to righteousness. In all three of these passages, the new person is no longer living a life of sin but has put away the former lifestyle with its lusts and deeds.

Some fear their family or friends perished when they died without ever getting baptized. My dear mom came to Christ just a few months before her death from cancer but wasn't baptized. We take great comfort reminding ourselves that the thief on the cross didn't perish.

God won't allow anyone to perish on a technicality. This isn't relegating baptism to a mere formality nor is it alleging it to be unimportant. It's very important because Jesus Christ commanded it. But this is simply recognizing its proper place and purpose. For example, if someone repented and was serving Christ as Lord but didn't get baptized before death for various reasons—they were sincerely ignorant that Christ commanded it, they were in the desert, they died in a car crash on the way to be baptized—that person didn't perish. On the other hand, someone that knew Christ's commandment to be baptized and had the opportunity but stubbornly refused, how can we have confidence that they'll be raised when Christ returns? If they wouldn't even obey His initial commandment to be baptized, how could He have been their Lord? It's not our place to judge their salvation but it certainly doesn't make us feel very good about it.

God doesn't need baptism to save us—it's for our benefit not His. It serves as a public confession that we're not ashamed of Jesus Christ but acknowledge who He is and commit ourselves to turn from a life of sin to serve Him unto death. It's the turning point of living as if a new person distinct from the old person we used to be.

Being born from above

What has become known as the new birth or being born again is more correctly stated as being born from above, "Except a man be **born again [anotthen]**" (Jhn 3:3), "**He that cometh from above [anotthen] is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly**, and speaketh of the earth: **he that cometh from heaven is above all**" (Jhn 3:31). And Paul taught the same about the resurrection when the Lord returns from heaven, "The first man **is of the earth, earthy**: the second man **is the Lord from heaven**" (1Co 15:47). It's not some kind of internal change from spiritual death to spiritual life, but birth back to life when the Lord "cometh from above" or "cometh from heaven" to raise the dead. It's being born from above when the Lord returns from above.

Jesus used the wind as an analogy of those born from above, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, **Ye must be born again [from above]. The wind** bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell **whence it cometh, and whither it goeth**: so is every one that is **born of the Spirit [Breath]**" (Jhn 3:7-8). Like it is with the wind, we must recognize where Jesus came from and where He went, "And no man hath **ascended up to heaven**, but he that **came down from heaven, even the Son of man** which is in heaven" (Jhn 3:13). If we'll live our lives in conformity to the truth of who He is and where He is right now at the right hand of God, then we'll be born to life when He returns.

In the view that we're already born again right now from a state of spiritual death to life, statements like this are problematic, "Whosoever is **born of God** doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and **he cannot sin, because he is born of God**" (1Jo 3:9). Once we're "born of God," we *cannot* sin. Of course this has to be explained away as if the apostle didn't know what he was talking about. Therefore, what John *really*

meant is that we don't habitually sin. But he said in the prior verse, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might **destroy the works of the devil.**" (1Jo 3:8). The works of the devil haven't been destroyed yet because he's still working now. But once we're "born of God" at Christ's return, we won't be tempted or deceived any further because the devil will be locked up and eventually destroyed: "**And cast him into the bottomless pit**, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, **that he should deceive the nations no more**, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season" (Rev 20:3), "And **the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone**, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev 20:10). It's when we're no longer being tempted and deceived that we *cannot* sin. That's eternal security!

Faithfulness to the Lord

Many have noted an obvious disconnect between the "saved through faith" (Eph 2:8) gospel taught by the apostle Paul and what the Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught about faithfulness to Him as Lord: "Who then is a **faithful and wise servant**" (Mat 24:45), "Well done, *thou good and faithful servant*" (Mat 25:21), "Who then is that **faithful and wise steward**" (Luk 12:42), "He that is **faithful** in that which is least is **faithful** also in much" (Luk 16:10), "Well, thou **good servant**: because thou hast been **faithful** in a very little" (Luke 19:17). The apparent discrepancy is caused by the translators rendering the Greek noun *pistis* throughout the New Testament as "faith" instead of "faithfulness" to be consistent with their view of salvation. Because Paul's writings are mostly doctrinal in the genre, it's fairly easy for the translators to accomplish this undetected. But Jesus Christ taught parables about faithful servants which force a context that can't be effectively mistranslated. The bottom line is that if we'll just replace "faithfulness" for "faith" in all occurrences of *pistis*, we'll see that Paul indeed taught faithfulness. His gospel of "saved through faith [*faithfulness*]" (Eph 2:8), is the truth he learned from Jesus Christ, "But ye have not so **learned Christ**; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been **taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus**" (Eph 4:20-21).

Now, "faithfulness" doesn't exclude "faith" at all. That's not even possible because there's an element of faith or belief in any good relationship. We can't have a faithful and trusting relationship with someone yet not believe a word they say! But the reformers made "faith" the *sine qua non* of salvation—that everything stands or falls with "faith." We're saved by "faith alone" or *sola fide* and anything that's not faith is supposedly our works, or trying to save ourselves. However, the three main passages used to argue this "faith" versus "works" contention say nothing of the sort.

For no one is declared righteous before him by the works of the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God (which is attested by the law and the prophets) has been disclosed - namely, the righteousness of God through **the faithfulness of Jesus Christ** for all who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:20-23 NET)

We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet we know that **no one is justified by the works of the law but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ**. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified **by the faithfulness of Christ and not by the works of the law**, because **by the works of the law** no one will be justified. ... I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live

because of **the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.** I do not set aside God's grace, because **if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!** (Galatians 2:15-16, 20-21 NET).

More than that, I now regard all things as liabilities compared to the far greater value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things - indeed, I regard them as dung! - that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, **not because I have my own righteousness derived from the law, but because I have the righteousness that comes by way of Christ's faithfulness - a righteousness from God that is in fact based on Christ's faithfulness.** (Philippians 3:8-9 NET)

There is no "faith" versus "works" issue in Scripture. It's simply an artificial distinction necessary for supporting *sola fide*. Because if we're saved by faith alone, then there must be a term to call everything else that's not faith—that term became known as "works." But this isn't what Paul was teaching in these three passages. He was arguing that righteousness is by Christ's faithfulness to give Himself as a sacrifice for our sins, not by the works of the Law of Moses. The real issue is Christ's faithfulness versus the works of the Law. Therefore, it would be more Scripturally accurate to say *sola fidelitas*! Salvation is by "faithfulness alone" because Christ's faithfulness to die for our sins is the only way to be right with God.

The absurdity of *sola fide* becomes apparent when introduced into the context of human relationships. Take the workplace as somewhat of an example of our walk with God. Our time belongs to our employer. We abide by the company rules. We do the work we're told to do while being dependable, honest, and faithful. We don't always know why our employer wants us to do specific things but we trust that they know the bigger picture and how it will positively affect the overall health of the company and the community. We also know that since we're simply doing what we're told, we trust that our employer has our back if we were to experience any repercussions from doing an assignment. If we're doing a good job we'll be rewarded but if we're doing poorly, then it can result in disciplinary action and possible termination. All of that makes sense.

Now, let's interject "faith" or "belief" as the *sole* requisite for employment. Employees get hired because they express belief in their employer. After getting hired many of them argue among themselves about whether they were hired because they believe the employer, or if they believe the employer because they were hired. Some even dare to claim that their employer gave them the belief they needed to get hired. They also squabble about whether they do a good job because they believe the employer, or if they believe the employer because they do a good job. Of course some claim that job performance has a direct bearing on their security but others claim Once Employed Always Employed. Therefore, when someone quits or gets let go, those that embrace OEAE have to say, "Well, I guess they never really were employed, because if they had been they would have continued to be employed. Therefore, they never truly believed the employer!"

Trusting God

As with the noun *pistis* almost always translated as "faith" instead of "faithfulness," the verb *pisteuo* is consistently rendered throughout the New Testament as "believe" instead of "trust." Why is this? It's because of bias toward the doctrine of salvation by faith or belief. When Paul cited Abraham's righteousness before God, "**Abraham believed [trusted] God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness**" (Rom 4:3), it wasn't to claim that he simply believed what God said but that he trusted God to do what He said. James wrote that

his trust in God was displayed by obeying what He commanded, “Was not Abraham our father **justified by works [actions]**, when he had **offered Isaac his son upon the altar?** Seest thou how **faith [faithfulness]** wrought with his **works [actions]**, and by **works [actions]** was **faith [faithfulness]** made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, **Abraham believed [trusted] God**, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.” (Jas 2:21-23).

Abraham’s actions of obedience, “because thou hast **obeyed my voice**” (Gen 22:18), justified what had been said about him years before, “And he **believed [trusted] in the LORD**; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6). This is what James meant by “justified by works [actions].” It accomplishes nothing to *say* we’re faithful yet not be faithful, “**What doth it profit**, my brethren, though a man **say he hath faith [faithfulness]**, and have not **works [actions]?**” (Jas 2:14). It’s better to say nothing at all and let our actions speak for themselves, “I will shew thee my **faith [faithfulness] by my works [actions]**” (Jas 2:18).

That Abraham “believed [trusted] in the LORD” (Gen 15:6), isn’t that he simply believed whatever God said—sure he did. It was that he put his trust in God and obeyed Him. It took tremendous trust to follow through with what God told him to do to his son Isaac, and not understanding how it was all going to work out. We’re even told, “Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead” (Heb 11:19). It’s the preeminent kind of trust Solomon would later pen, “**Trust in the LORD** with all thine heart; and lean not unto **thine own understanding**” (Pro 3:5).

That *pisteuo* should be translated “trust” rather than “believe” is also consistent with the Psalms being replete with injunctions to trust God: “Blessed *are* all they that **put their trust in him**” (Psa 2:12); “Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and **put your trust in the LORD**” (Psa 4:5); “But let all those that **put their trust in thee** rejoice” (Psa 5:11); “O LORD my God, **in thee do I put my trust**” (Psa 7:1); “And they that know thy name will **put their trust in thee**” (Psa 9:10); “**In the LORD put I my trust**” (Psa 11:1); “Preserve me, O God: for **in thee do I put my trust**” (Psa 16:1); “O thou that savest by thy right hand them which **put their trust in thee**” (Psa 17:7); “The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, **in whom I will trust**” (Psa 18:2); “I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: **I will trust in the covert of thy wings**” (Psa 61:4); “*He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God, **in him will I trust**” (Psa 91:2); “My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and **he in whom I trust**” (Psa 144:2); “O my God, **I trust in thee**” (Psa 25:2); “let me not be ashamed; for **I put my trust in thee**” (Psa 25:20); “In thee, O LORD, do **I put my trust**; let me never be ashamed” (Psa 31:1); “I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but **I trust in the LORD**” (Psa 31:6); “[Psa 37:3, 5, 40 KJV] 3 **Trust in the LORD**, and do good” (Psa 37:3); “Commit thy way unto the LORD; **trust also in him**” (Psa 37:5); “he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because **they trust in him**” (Psa 37:40); “Blessed *is* that man that **maketh the LORD his trust**” (Psa 40:4); “**I trust in the mercy of God** for ever and ever” (Psa 52:8); “What time I am afraid, **I will trust in thee**. In God I will praise his word, **in God I have put my trust**” (Psa 56:3-4) “**In God have I put my trust**: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me” (Psa 56:11); “**Trust in him at all times**; ye people, pour out your heart before him” (Psa 62:8); “The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and **shall trust in him**” (Psa 64:10); “In thee, O LORD, do **I put my trust**: let me never be put to confusion” (Psa 71:1); “For thou *art* my hope, O Lord GOD: **thou art my trust from my youth**” (Psa 71:5); “**I have put my trust in the Lord GOD**, that I may declare all thy works” (Psa 73:28); “Ye that fear the LORD, **trust in the LORD**: he *is* their help and their shield” (Psa 115:11); “*It is* better to **trust in the LORD** than to put confidence in man” (Psa 118:8); “But mine eyes *are* unto thee, O GOD the Lord: **in thee is my trust**” (Psa 141:8); “Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for **in thee do I trust**” (Psa 143:8).

When Paul said, “and shalt **believe [trust] in thine heart** that God hath raised him from the dead, **thou shalt be saved**” (Rom 10:9), he meant that we’re to believe Christ’s resurrection happened as a historical event. That’s a given. However, his predominant point was that we’re to trust God that raised Christ, “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that **it was imputed to him**; But for us also, to whom **it shall be imputed**, if we **believe [trust] on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead**” (Rom 4:23-24). God counted Abraham in a right relationship because he trusted Him, “Abraham believed [*trusted*] God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom 4:3). To “believe [*trust*] in thine heart” is to “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto **thine own understanding**” (Pro 3:5). Salvation is not by belief but by trusting God with all our hearts.

“For with the heart man **believeth [trusts] unto righteousness**” (Rom 10:10). We’re right with God by a continued trusting relationship with Him. If we can’t trust Him for our necessities of daily life, how can we trust Him for eternal life? If we can’t trust Him for our lesser needs, how can we trust Him for our greatest need—salvation from death? If we spend our lives taking matters into our own hands, then when the day of our death comes, how can we commit our breath into His hands, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit [*breath*]” (Luk 23:46)?

Paul went on to say, “For the scripture saith, Whosoever **believeth [trusts] on him shall not be ashamed**” (Rom 10:11). And this is what David did, “O my God, **I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed**, let not mine enemies triumph over me” (Psa 25:2); “O keep my soul, and deliver me: **let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee**” (Psa 25:20); “In thee, O LORD, do **I put my trust; let me never be ashamed**” (Psa 31:1). Salvation is living our lives and finally going to our deaths trusting that we’re not going to be put to shame or let down. It takes trust to suffer wrongfully with only God seeing it, “For this *is* thankworthy, if a man **for conscience toward God** endure grief, **suffering wrongfully**” (1Pe 2:19). But He’s not going to let us down—our hope of the resurrection isn’t going to be put to shame, “And hope maketh not ashamed” (Rom 5:5). When we recognize that salvation is getting victory over death when Christ returns to raise the dead, then we’ll trust God unto death with confidence that we won’t be let down but will be raised to eternal life.

It’s faithfulness and trust that pleases God, “But without **faith [faithfulness]** *it is* impossible to **please him**: for he that cometh to God must **believe [trust]** that he is, and *that he is a rewarder* of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6). All of the “By faith ...” examples in Hebrews chapter 11 are really “By faithfulness ...” examples. Their faithfulness to God consummated with Christ’s faithfulness, “Looking unto Jesus the **author and finisher of our faith [faithfulness]**; who for the joy that was set before him **endured the cross**, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2). Christ’s faithfulness to endure the cross is the beginning and ending purpose for the faithfulness of everyone before Him. There’s no explanation for their faithfulness apart from His.

The distinction of a Christian

At the conclusion of the first evangelistic message of the church age, Peter said, “**Repent, and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**, and ye shall **receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Breath]**” (Act 2:38-39). The distinction of a Christian is that our sins have been forgiven, and that we have the gift of the indwelling Holy Breath as a pledge of salvation from death. Our salvation is twofold because we need to be saved from two things—sin and death. We need our sins forgiven so we can have a right relationship with God, but we also need victory over death so we can live forever with God. Of course

Christ saved us from both sin and death but we only have forgiveness of sins right now. We have yet to experience salvation from death for the obvious reason that we all still die.

True Christians have God's Breath dwelling in their hearts: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit [*Breath*], if so be that **the Spirit [*Breath*] of God dwell in you**" (Rom 8:9); "But if **the Spirit [*Breath*]** of him that raised up Jesus from the dead **dwell in you**, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by **his Spirit [*Breath*] that dwelleth in you**" (Rom 8:11); "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but **ye have received the Spirit [*Breath*] of adoption**, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15); "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of **the Holy Ghost [*Breath*] which is in you**, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1Co 6:19); "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, **I will dwell in them**, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2Co 6:16); "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth **the Spirit [*Breath*] of his Son into your hearts**, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal 4:6); "In whom ye also are builded together for **an habitation of God through the Spirit [*Breath*]**" (Eph 2:22); "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by **the Holy Ghost [*Breath*] which dwelleth in us**" (2Ti 1:14); "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that **he abideth in us, by the Spirit [*Breath*] which he hath given us.**" (1Jo 3:24).

Since we're physical beings, there is no internal change from some kind of spiritual death to spiritual life at conversion. Nothing changes inside because there's nothing *to* change. We do, however, begin receiving God's Breath into our hearts at conversion. His Breath is not a one-time deposit as if dropping a quarter into a jukebox. But as with our natural breathing, it's a continual breathing and infilling in our hearts: "Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost [*Breath*]" (Luk 1:41); "And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost [*Breath*]" (Luk 1:67); "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost [*Breath*]" (Act 4:8); "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost [*Breath*]" (Act 4:31); "that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost [*Breath*]" (Act 9:17); "Then Saul, (who also *is called* Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost [*Breath*]" (Act 13:9).

God's Breath in our hearts is the earnest, guarantee, or pledge that we will be resurrected from the dead: "But if **the Spirit [*Breath*]** of him that raised up Jesus from the dead **dwell in you**, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by **his Spirit [*Breath*] that dwelleth in you**" (Rom 8:11); "Who hath also sealed us, and given **the earnest of the Spirit [*Breath*] in our hearts**" (2Co 1:22); "God, who also hath given unto us **the earnest of the Spirit [*Breath*]**" (2Co 5:5); "ye were sealed with that **holy Spirit [*Breath*] of promise, Which is the earnest** of our inheritance" (Eph 1:13-14).

We continue in Him by His Breath continuing in us

In his first letter, John spoke of the anointing or Holy Breath continuing in us, "But **the anointing** which ye have received of him **abideth [*continues*] in you**" (1Jo 2:27), "And hereby we know that **he abideth [*continues*] in us, by the Spirit [*Breath*]** which he hath given us" (1Jo 3:24), "Hereby know we that we **dwell [*continue*] in him, and he in us**, because he hath given us of **his Spirit [*Breath*]**" (1Jo 4:13).

Jesus' parable of the Vine and Branches was a directive to the remaining eleven disciples to continue in Him, "**Abide [*continue*] in me, and I in you**. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except **ye abide [*continue*] in me**" (Jhn 15:4). Judas Iscariot didn't continue in the Son, therefore

the Breath of the Father didn't continue in him, **"If a man abide [continue] not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned"** (Jhn 15:6). Jesus had said that he was a child of the Father by His Breath, **"For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit [Breath] of your Father** which speaketh in you" (Mat 10:20), **"how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit [Breath] to them that ask him?"** (Luk 11:13). But the Father's Breath left him and the enemy entered, **"And after the sop Satan entered into him"** (Jhn 13:27).

When a **strong man** armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a **stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him**, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. **When the unclean spirit [breath] is gone out of a man**, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, **I will return unto my house whence I came out**. And when he cometh, he findeth *it* swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh *to him* seven other spirits [breaths] more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and **the last state of that man is worse than the first**. (Luke 11:21-26)

Because we've all sinned, we've all become slaves to sin: **"Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin"** (Jhn 8:34); **"For when ye were the servants of sin"** (Rom 6:20); **"I am carnal, sold under sin"** (Rom 7:14); **"for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage"** (2Pe 2:19); **"He that committeth sin is of the devil"** (1Jo 3:8). Because we're slaves to sin, we have an unclean breath in our hearts and we're held by this "strong man" that's stronger than ourselves. We're simply powerless to overcome this bondage. But when we come to Christ, God gives us His Holy Breath that is stronger than the unclean breath and drives it out. His Breath in us is greater than the unclean breath in the rest of the world, **"greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"** (1Jo 4:4).

We depend on the strength of His Breath continually to overcome the enemy: **"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man"** (Eph 3:16); **"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might"** (Eph 6:10); **"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"** (Phl 4:13); **"Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness"** (Col 1:11).

However, if we don't continue in Him, then God's Breath won't continue in us and that unclean breath will return and bring more: **"I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits [breaths] more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."** (Luk 11:24-26); **"In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will"** (2Ti 2:25-26); **"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning"** (2Pe 2:20).

Jesus said that blasphemy against the Breath will never be forgiven, **"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost [Breath] shall not be forgiven unto men"** (Mat 12:31). This is what happened to King Saul, **"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry"** (1Sa 15:23), **"But the Spirit [Breath] of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit [breath] from the LORD troubled him"** (1Sa 16:14). God knows our

hearts and is merciful to sincere ignorance of the truth. But once we're no longer ignorant yet stubbornly rebel, we're in danger of blaspheming against His Breath for which there will never be mercy or forgiveness. David knew that this is what happened to Saul and feared greatly that his sin would result in the same fate, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and **take not thy holy spirit [breath] from me**" (Psa 51:11).

John wrote that until Christ returns, remaining or continuing in fellowship with the Son and the Father is conditional, "**If that** which ye have heard from the beginning **shall remain [continue] in you, ye also shall continue** in the Son, and in the Father" (1Jo 2:24), "And now, little children, **abide [continue] in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming**" (1Jo 2:28). However, once we've been "born of God" at His coming, remaining or continuing is unconditional, "Whosoever is **born of God** doth not commit sin; for **his seed remaineth [continues] in him:** and he cannot sin, because he is **born of God**" (1Jo 3:9). We absolutely will remain and continue in Him at that point because we can never sin again.

Once we've been resurrected after the same likeness as Christ's resurrection, we'll be in the same state of righteousness. In other words, there's no more possibility of us sinning than Him sinning. We'll truly be that secure! For something to happen to us, it would have to happen to Him too which is what He meant when He said, "By myself have I sworn" (Gen 22:16). He *is* the promise and guarantee of our eternal life.

Paul taught that resurrection from death is like a seed springing from the ground to life, "*Thou* fool, **that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:** And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, **it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:** But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to **every seed his own body**" (1Co 15:36-38). A seed produces after its kind and it's in the fruit, "the fruit tree yielding **fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself** ... the tree yielding **fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind**" (Gen 1:11-12). Therefore, like a seed, if we're faithful to death "after his kind," we'll be resurrected from the dead "after his kind." Our security will be in Him forever because the seed is in the fruit, "his seed remaineth [continues] in him" (1Jo 3:9).

Finishing the race in faithfulness

Salvation from death at Christ's return comes to those that belong to Him and go to their deaths in faithful service to Him: "whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom 14:8); "fallen asleep in Christ" (1Co 15:18); "in Christ shall all be made alive" (1Co 15:22); "they that are Christ's at his coming" (1Co 15:23), "the dead in Christ" (1Th 4:16); "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus" (2Ti 1:1); "These all died in faith [faithfulness]" (Heb 11:13); "be thou faithful unto death" (Rev 2:10); "the dead which die in the Lord" (Rev 14:13).

Several times Paul likened salvation to running a race: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain" (1Co 9:24); "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Gal 5:7); "Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain" (Phl 2:16); "I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith [faithfulness]" (2Ti 4:7).

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto **the resurrection of**

the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, **I count not myself to have apprehended**: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, **I press toward the mark for the prize** of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:10-14)

Here in Philippians, Paul didn't count himself to have apprehended the resurrection but viewed it as a prize that he was striving to attain. He had said earlier in his letter, "Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice **in the day of Christ**, that I have not **run in vain**, neither laboured in vain" (Phl 2:16). The prize at the finish line is resurrection "in the day of Christ."

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, **I have finished my course, I have kept the faith [faithfulness]**: Henceforth there is laid up for me **a crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me **at that day**: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love **his appearing**. (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

Although earlier in his life Paul didn't count himself to have apprehended, before his death he did. He considered at this point his race to be finished and had been faithful to death. And he saw his reward coming on the day of "his appearing."

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us **run with patience the race that is set before us**, Looking unto **Jesus the author and finisher of our faith [faithfulness]**; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

The men and women in the Old Testament "died in faith [faithfulness]" (Heb 11:13). They had a race set before them and finished by being faithful unto death. Of course Jesus Christ Himself is the quintessential example of dying in faithfulness which is why we should be "looking unto" Him.

God designed the creation itself to teach us about salvation, "In them hath he set a tabernacle for **the sun**, Which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *and* rejoiceth as **a strong man to run a race**. His going forth *is* **from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it**" (Psa 19:4-6). From man's perspective, the sun rises in the east and shines its light, then sets in the west leaving us in darkness. It's seemingly on a fixed course of travel from beginning to end. And this is similar to a race. The course is set and strong men or athletes must run the entire circuit and cross the finish line at the end.

Salvation isn't so much about how we start as it is how we finish, and the finish line is the same for all of us—death. We must cross the finish line in faithfulness. This doesn't mean necessarily that we must die a martyr. We're told "These all died in faith [faithfulness]" (Heb 11:13), yet some of them—even the greatest of them, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David—died natural deaths. It's that we live in a faithful and trusting relationship with God until the day we die.

Once Saved Always Saved is dangerous

The doctrine of unconditional eternal security or Once Saved Always Saved (OSAS) is the fruit of an erroneous view of salvation based on a faulty view of man. If man is an eternal non-physical being that is spiritually dead, then salvation and eternal life is a change from spiritual death to spiritual life that we have now. And since we have eternal life now, then we're eternally secure now. After all, as proponents of OSAS jeer, since eternal life is eternal, how could it be forfeited or lost? It's eternal by very definition.

Advocates of OSAS are right that salvation can't be lost but wrong about *what* and *when* it is. Salvation or eternal life isn't an inner change from spiritual death to spiritual life now. It's resurrection from the dead to eternal life at the return of the Lord. It's at that point we'll truly be OSAS! It's correct to recognize that eternal life truly is eternal, but incorrect to suppose we have it right now.

Jesus' statement, "And I give unto them **eternal life**; and they shall never perish, **neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand**" (Jhn 10:28), is a favorite those championing OSAS. And He was speaking of eternal security but once we have eternal life. It's because we can never die again that nobody can ever harm us again, "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that **kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do**" (Luk 12:4). Eternal security is being in the presence of the Lord forever, "Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and **so shall we ever be with the Lord**" (1Th 4:17). Once we're born of God, we'll continue in Him forever, "Whosoever is **born of God** doth not commit sin; for his seed **remaineth [continues] in him**: and he **cannot sin**, because he is **born of God**" (1Jo 3:9). And this security is unconditional because we *cannot* sin ever again.

Salvation isn't a formula. It isn't doing 'A' to get 'B.' Yet a faith-confession formula is essentially what's being taught today in mainstream Protestant Christianity. But if salvation is by a formula, then assurance of salvation is by the same formula. If we're saved by 4 Steps to Peace with God, then assurance comes by stressing to ourselves that we completed the 4 Steps.

Salvation comes to those that have a right relationship with God, and relationships don't function by formulas. Just try using formulas on your spouse. I found it doesn't work! In this life Christians are forgiven and have a right relationship with God that will consummate in salvation from death when Christ returns. Since we're not even saved at this point, there's no such thing as losing or forfeiting salvation. We can't lose what we don't have. What we have is a right relationship with God and relationships can be severed or broken.

Some hold a misconception that God is obligated to save us—not just that He *can* but that He *must*. If we've performed the faith-confession formula, then we're saved and always will be. It's almost as though *we're* now in control and God must always nod in agreement. But it's God that saves us and *He* is in control. He sent His only begotten Son to sacrifice Himself for our sins so that we could be forgiven and have a right relationship with Him. But we're still at His mercy even after we've been forgiven. He doesn't have to do anything for us.

Wisdom begins with fearing God, "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom" (Psa 111:10; Pro 9:10). It's the fear that He absolutely will exact the punishment for our sins that prompts our obedience to His Son Jesus Christ. The reason the false doctrine of OSAS is so dangerous is that it diminishes the fear of the Lord. If we're already saved right now and can never lose it, then the consequences for our sins have forever been removed. Why fear God anymore? If we're eternally secure right now, then there are no more consequences for our sins. It doesn't matter if we sin, or how we treat each other. Nothing we do or don't do ultimately

matters because we're "getting in" no matter what. Now, of course, few Christians would ever admit thinking this way.

The fear of possibly falling away from Christ is a good thing not a bad thing. The warning passages in Scripture, most notably, "If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame" (Heb 6:6), "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins," (Heb 10:26), are for our benefit to help prevent us from falling away. God doesn't want us to ultimately perish and gave such warning passages to help prevent this from happening. They act somewhat like a safety net. But OSAS is dangerous because it voids and nullifies the warnings and contributes to Christians falling away. Those who teach OSAS are unwittingly helping facilitate the falling away of Christians!

The real question we should ask isn't if we're OSAS but rather if we're Once Forgiven Always Forgiven. In Matthew 18, Jesus told a parable about a king that forgave one of his servants a tremendous debt but then later put all of the debt right back on his account, "Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and **forgave him the debt**" (Mat 18:27), "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, **till he should pay all that was due unto him**" (Mat 18:34). Jesus then stated that this is likewise how God the Father will do to us, "**So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you**, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Mat 18:35). We can be forgiven and at peace with God but then later no longer forgiven and become His enemy again.

Though we've been forgiven by God, He won't continue to forgive us if we don't forgive others: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mat 6:14-15); "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." (Mar 11:25-26); "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph 4:32); "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do ye*" (Col 3:13); "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (Jas 2:13).

We do a disservice to people by simply helping them feel at ease and more comfortable about their salvation. We should be helping them *be* saved even if they have to be made quite uncomfortable and possibly fearful. It's not about making people happy but keeping them from perishing.

Our salvation from death in resurrection is contingent upon a continued right relationship with God unto our deaths. Proponents of OSAS like to badger that if salvation can be lost, then at what point does it happen? But that question is a ruse because we're not even saved. We can't lose what we don't have. As far as the possibility of our relationship with God being permanently broken—at what point it happens, what causes it to happen, how it can be known that it happened—there's no simple answer because relationships aren't simple! It's God's prerogative to allow our relationship to continue, or to sever it at any point along the way. He can decide to cast us from His presence and take His Breath away, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit [*breath*] from me" (Psa 51:11).

Assurance of salvation

Many Christians are desperate for assurance of salvation because they've been wrongly taught that the destiny of the unsaved is eternal burning alive. When the consequences of being unsaved are *that* unimaginably horrifying, assurance becomes highly critical. But learning the truth that annihilation is the antithesis of eternal life puts assurance or lack thereof in its proper context and perspective. Annihilation certainly isn't a desirable destiny either yet is far more palatable.

When it comes to assurance, the first thing we need to concede is that having it isn't always a good thing because of false assurance. Being falsely assured of having something we don't have is not only unconstructive but also destructive. Because wrongly supposing we already have what we want prevents us from ever getting it. False assurance we're already saved almost guarantees we never will be.

People belonging to false religions and cults many times have an assurance of salvation but it's false. Assurance is good only when it's true. Rather than seeking assurance necessarily, our pursuit should be for further knowledge of the truth. The more truth we gain—knowledge of reality or the actual state—the better off we'll be.

The main reason many Christians struggle with assurance of salvation is because they've been taught a wrong view of man and his salvation—a false view of reality or its actual state. Therefore, they're trying to gain assurance of something that isn't true and get something that can't be had. The first step toward having the kind of assurance God intends for us to have is acknowledging the truth that man is a physical being whose final destiny is either eternal life with Christ in His Kingdom or complete annihilation from existence. Next, we must recognize that none of us are saved right now but will be saved and have eternal life once we're raised from the dead at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The starting point of assurance, therefore, is identifying exactly *what* we need assurance of. Since salvation isn't an inner change in the state of being, we shouldn't be pursuing assurance of that. We simply can't have true assurance of something we don't have. What we *do* have is forgiveness of sins and a right relationship with God the Father. And the assurance that we're right with Him and belong to Him as dear children, comes only from Him.

It's walking with God daily in a faithful and trusting relationship that strengthens our assurance that we're forgiven and right with Him. Jesus told us, "Therefore I say unto you, **Take no thought for your life**, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on ... **Take therefore no thought for the morrow**: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof" (Mat 6:25, 34). Trusting God to sustain our daily lives assures us He's going to give us eternal life. Experiencing Him *is* the greatest assurance! We can know we're His children when we trust Him and He takes care of us as our loving Father.

I'll share a personal experience that bolstered my assurance tremendously. There was a time when I was in a dire situation that I had tried and tried to fix myself rather than trusting God. Finally, the day came that everything was about to fall apart and I was greatly disturbed and shook up about what was going to happen. At the end of my ropes so to speak, I was sitting in my car and just cried out in tears for God to help me. At that very instant He spoke this verse to my mind, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof" (Mat 6:34). It was the

most real encounter with God I've ever experienced. There was no doubt that He spoke to my mind. It made me realize that I hadn't been trusting God with all my heart, or even very much at all. At that moment I committed to start trusting Him every day and no longer worry about tomorrow. What's more is that for the rest of that day, He gave me peace inside that passes all understanding, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phl 4:7). It didn't make sense that I could have peace through that particular situation yet I wasn't the least bit worried. In the end, the entire circumstance worked itself out without doing anything myself. The assurance I received that day, as well as many other times since, were from God Himself.

On the negative side, God's discipline also assures us of being His children, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and **scourgeth every son** whom he receiveth. **If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons;** for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Heb 12:6-7). I could also tell of a time when I went through a long period of His discipline because I wasn't living right before Him. Enduring that span of difficulty certainly wasn't pleasant yet was effective at not only getting me back on track but also assuring me of being His child.

God tries and tests our faithfulness to Him, and proven faithfulness is great assurance: "But he knoweth the way that I take: **when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold**" (Job 23:10); "The fining pot *is* for silver, and the furnace for gold: but **the LORD trieth the hearts**" (Pro 17:3); "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will **try them as gold is tried**" (Zec 13:9); "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your **faith [faithfulness]** worketh patience" (Jas 1:2-3); "**That the trial of your faith [faithfulness]**, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:7).

Our prayer life is another tremendous source of assurance. Of course I've had times when my prayers weren't answered, but other times they were answered and even almost immediately. I can remember numerous occasions when I needed an answer to something urgently and it was given to my mind and heart right away in answer to prayer. But then there have also been times when the answer wasn't needed urgently and God gave it to me days, months, or even years later when I wasn't even thinking about it. What great assurance of belonging to Him when we receive the right answer to something and we weren't even trying to get it.

The final means of assurance we'll mention is forgiveness when we repent of sin. That feeling of the burden of guilt lifting and having a clear conscience is a great assurance that God is continuing to count us right with Him. Of course the ideal scenario is to *not* sin in the first place. However, a clear conscience after repenting of a sin is a great assurance of our continued relationship with God.

Conclusion

Pastors watch for the souls of the flock they oversee, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for **they watch for your souls, as they that must give account**, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you" (Heb 13:17). If they truly love Jesus Christ and His flock, they'll make every effort to be sure they're teaching the truth about salvation. It's not their fault they were taught a false view in seminary. However, they become culpable once they come to the knowledge of the truth.

Saul of Tarsus was shown mercy because he had been sincerely ignorant, “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but **I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly** in unbelief” (1Ti 1:13). But after he came to the knowledge of the truth, Christ required him to embrace it along with the accompanying sufferings. With knowledge comes a decision that we’re held accountable for. We can decide to either continue teaching what we’ve come to know is false, or begin teaching what we now know is the truth.

Christians are confused, fearful, and deceived about salvation. They’ve been taught truthfully that salvation comes only through Jesus Christ, but falsely about what they are and what salvation is. They’ve been taught that they’re an eternal non-physical being that will leave the body at death and go to either heaven or hell forever, and the prospect of burning alive forever is unthinkable. Therefore, since they’re saved by faith alone and they’ve made the faith-confession, they’re good to go! They’ve had the internal change in the state of being from spiritual death to spiritual life—born again to a new creature. They’re now saved and always will be. But if doubts creep in about their salvation, they only need to remind themselves that they made the faith-confession.

If we love the Lord Jesus Christ and we love people, we’ll tell people the truth about salvation, “But speaking the truth in love” (Eph 4:15). We’ll tell them what the Creator Himself said that they are, “for dust thou *art*” (Gen 3:19), and we’ll tell them what salvation is—that it’s being forgiven and right with God now, then getting the victory over death at Christ’s return. We’ll tell them that being right with God comes by repenting of their sins and declaring that Jesus Christ is their Lord in public water baptism. At that point they’ll begin receiving God’s Breath into their hearts to live by His strength as if they’re a completely new person from the old. They’ll live in faithfulness and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, and a trusting relationship with God as their Father. Their assurance will come from their continued relationship with God—remaining in Christ and God’s Breath remaining in them. But along with this blessed relationship also comes suffering for Christ’s sake, for His name and glory. Their faithfulness will be tested many times but if they’ll remain faithful and die “in Christ,” if they’ll finish this “race” they started, they’ll be born from above—raised to eternal life at Christ’s return from above. They’ll be with the Lord forever in His Kingdom on this earth in the renewed creation. They won’t go to live with God, He will come to live with them, “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of **God is with men, and he will dwell with them**, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God” (Rev 21:3).