

## Is Saving Faith the Act of a Moment or the Attitude of a Life?

Many believe that saving faith is the act of a moment—one great moment in which the sinner humbly acknowledges his sin in repentance toward God and accepts Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. They believe that one grand and holy moment of decision ushers one into an irrevocable state of grace in which he is unconditionally secure. But others are persuaded that the moment of holy decision is but the beginning, and that the state of grace is not irrevocable in our present earthly sojourn in God’s moral universe in which “the just shall live by faith.” They are persuaded that saving faith is not the act of a moment, but the attitude of a life; the initial decision must be perpetually implemented throughout the life of the believer, and such is not inevitable. Who is right?

In 1961, Robert Shank asked this question in his book, *Life in the Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Perseverance*.<sup>1</sup> Where he stood was made clear when he stated: “The New Testament affirms that eternal life in Christ is our present possession only on the condition of a present living faith, rather than as the irrevocable consequence of a moment’s act of faith sometime in the past.”<sup>2</sup> You need to note two things that Shank is affirming in this statement. First, eternal life is “in Christ.” By “in Christ,” Shank means that eternal life is possessed in a *living relationship with the living Savior Jesus Christ*. Second, the *condition* for possessing eternal life in Christ is a *living or persevering faith*. For support he asked his readers to consider John 1:12:

“As many as received him [*elabon*, aorist indicative, a definite act in past time—conversion] to them gave he power to become [or, to be] children of God, those who believe [*pisteuousin*, present participle, present progressive action—perseverance in faith] in his name.” John depicts both aspects—the initial act of faith at the reception of Christ, whereby the relationship is effected, and the persevering faith in Him whereby the relationship is sustained.<sup>3</sup>

For Shank it necessarily follows that,

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<sup>1</sup> Originally published in Springfield: Westcott, 1961. Reprint, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1989, 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Life in the Son*, 63.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 92, brackets are his.

Throughout his earthly sojourn, the relation of the individual to Christ is never a *static* relationship existing as the irrevocable consequence of a past decision, act, or experience. Rather it is a present mutual indwelling of the believer and the Savior, the sharing of a common life which emanates from Him “who is our life” (Col. 3:4). For the believer, it is a living participation proceeding upon a living faith in a living Savior.<sup>4</sup>

Since the writing of his book, some teachers have objected to Shank’s thesis that eternal life in Christ is conditional upon a living or persevering faith. I would like to determine if these objections are justified in light of the Scriptural evidence. But first, it would be helpful for the reader to see how Christians from different theological traditions define saving faith.

### **What Moderate Calvinists are Saying about Saving Faith**

All Calvinists believe in unconditional security, but there is a distinct difference between the Reformed and Moderate versions. The Moderate Calvinist believes that *one moment of faith* secures a Christian’s eternal destiny. Joseph Dillow writes:

Even though Robert Shank would not agree, it is definitely true that saving faith is “the act of a single moment whereby all the benefits of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection suddenly become the irrevocable possession of the individual, per se, despite any and all eventualities.”<sup>5</sup>

Would “any and all eventualities” include falling away from the Christian faith and becoming an unbeliever? For the Moderate Calvinist the answer would be “Yes.” Dillow says, “It is possible for a truly born-again person to fall away from the faith and cease

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<sup>4</sup> Shank, 42-43.

<sup>5</sup> *The Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man* (Hayesville: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1992), 202. Popular author Ron Rhodes appears to agree with Dillow: “I believe that Scripture consistently teaches that once a person trusts in Christ and becomes a part of God’s forever family, he or she is saved forever (Romans 8:28-30). No matter what that child of God does after the moment of salvation, he or she is saved” (*The Heart of Christianity* [Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1996], 111).

believing.”<sup>6</sup> “What he forfeits when he ‘falls away’ is not his eternal destiny but his opportunity to reign with Christ’s metochoi [partners]<sup>7</sup> in the coming kingdom.”<sup>8</sup>

Pastor and author Charles Stanley communicates the same view in his book, *Eternal Security: Can You Be Sure?*

The Bible clearly teaches that God’s love for His people is of such magnitude that even those who walk away from the faith have not the slightest chance of slipping from His hand.<sup>9</sup>

Salvation or justification or adoption—whatever you wish to call it—stands independently of [a person’s] faith. Consequently, God does not require a *constant attitude* of faith in order to be saved—only an *act* of faith.

. . . If I chose to have a tattoo put on my arm, that would involve a one-time act on my part. Yet the tattoo would remain with me indefinitely. I don’t have to maintain an attitude of fondness for tattoos to ensure that the tattoo remains on my arm. In fact I may change my mind the minute I receive it. But that does not change the fact that I have a tattoo on my arm. My request for the tattoo and the tattoo itself are two entirely different things. I received it by asking and paying for it. But asking for my money back and changing my attitude will not undo what is done.

Forgiveness/salvation is applied at the moment of faith. It is not the same thing as faith. And its permanence is not contingent upon the permanence of one’s faith.<sup>10</sup>

To say that our salvation can be taken from us for any reason, whether it be sin or disbelief, is to ignore the plain meaning of this text [Ephesians 2:8-9].<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Dillow, 199.

<sup>7</sup> Dillow says the metochoi “are those friends, partners, and companions who have endured the trials of life, were faithful to the end, who will therefore obtain the inheritance-rest” (*Reign of the Servant Kings*, 105-06). According to Dillow, this “inheritance-rest” refers to the millennial land of Canaan where faithful believers will rule with Christ during the millennium (see chapter 5).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>9</sup> *Eternal Security: Can You Be Sure?* (Nashville: Oliver-Nelson Books, 1990), 74. Charles Ryrie says, “What grace it is that can give us not only forgiveness and eternal life through faith alone but also guarantee that the Giver will never renege on His gift! Nor can we ever give it back even if we try!” (*So Great Salvation: What it Means to Believe in Jesus Christ* [Wheaton: Victor Book, 1989], 144).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80. Norman Geisler writes: “**Continued belief is not a condition for keeping one’s salvation.** Two related questions here must be distinguished. The first one is whether continual belief throughout one’s life is a necessary condition for keeping one’s salvation. In distinction from Arminians, the answer is negative” (“Moderate Calvinism,” *Four Views on Eternal Security* [J. Matthew Pinson, General Editor, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002], 109). Zane Hodges says: “. . . We miss the point to insist that true saving faith must necessarily continue. Of course, our faith in Christ should continue. But the claim that it absolutely must . . . has no support at all in the Bible” (*Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989], 63).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

Some people argue that the believer must maintain his *faith* in order to maintain his *salvation* . . . [I object to] those who hold that one's faith must be maintained to ensure the possession of eternal life.<sup>12</sup>

*Does the Scripture actually teach that regardless of the consistency of our faith, our salvation is secure?* Yes, it does . . .

If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him;  
If we endure, we shall also reign with Him;  
If we deny Him, He also will deny us;  
If we are *faithless*, He remains *faithful*,  
for He cannot deny Himself.

2 Timothy 2:11-13

The unfaithful believer will not receive a special place in the kingdom of Christ like those who are fortunate enough to be allowed to reign with him. But the unfaithful believer will not lose his salvation.

The apostle's meaning is evident. Even if a believer for all practical purposes becomes an unbeliever, his salvation is not in jeopardy. Christ will remain faithful . . . Christ will not deny an unbelieving Christian his or her salvation because to do so would be to deny Himself . . . Believers who lose or abandon their faith will retain their salvation, for God remains faithful.<sup>13</sup>

Dillow, Stanley and other Moderate Calvinists hold to a view of saving faith that is in stark contrast to the position held by Calvinists from the Reformed tradition.

## **What Reformed Calvinists are Saying about Saving Faith**

Reformer John Calvin (1509-1564), commenting on Hebrews 3:14, "For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end (NKJV), wrote:

He commends them for having begun well; but lest, under the pretext of the grace which they had obtained, they should indulge themselves in carnal security, he says that there was need of perseverance; for many having only tasted the Gospel, do not think of any progress as though they had reached the summit. Thus it is that they not only stop in the middle of their race, yea, nigh the starting posts, but turn another way. Plausible indeed is this objection, "What can we wish more after having found Christ?" But if he is possessed by faith, we must persevere in it, so that he may be our perpetual possession. Christ then has given himself to be enjoyed by us on this condition, that by the same faith

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 84, 92.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 93-94. This interpretation of 2 Tim 2:11-13 is also held by Dillow, Ibid., 427-30; Ryrie, Ibid., 140-42; and Geisler, Ibid., 111.

by which we have been admitted into a participation of him, we are to preserve so great a blessing even to death.

Hence he says *beginning*, intimating that their faith was only begun. . . . *Steadfast* or firm; for we shall be firmly fixed and beyond the danger of vacillating, provided faith be our foundation. The sum of the whole then is, that faith whose beginnings only appear in us, is to make constant and steady progress to the end.<sup>14</sup>

Anthony Hoekema, long time Professor of Calvin Theological Seminary, stated: “Peter puts it vividly: We are kept by the power of God *through faith*—a living faith, which expresses itself through love (Gal. 5:6). In other words, we may never simply rest on the comfort of God’s preservation apart from the continuing exercise of faith.”<sup>15</sup> Westminster Theology Professor John Murray agrees: “We may entertain the faith of our security in Christ only as we persevere in faith and holiness to the end.”<sup>16</sup> Popular apologist and Reformed author James White says,

Throughout this passage [John 6:35-45] an important truth is presented that again might be missed in many English translations. When Jesus describes the one who comes to Him and who believes in Him, He uses the present tense to describe this coming, believing, or, in other passages, hearing or seeing. The present tense refers to a *continuous, ongoing action*. . . . The wonderful promises that are provided by Christ are not for those who do not *truly* and *continually* believe. The faith that saves is a living faith, a faith that always looks to Christ as Lord and Savior. . . .

Many in our world today . . . teach essentially that a person can perform an act of believing on Christ *once*, and after this, they can fall away even into total unbelief and yet still supposedly be “saved.” . . . Christ does not save men in this way. The true Christian is the one *continually* coming, *always* believing in Christ. Real Christian faith is an ongoing faith, not a one-time act. If one wishes to be eternally satiated, one meal is not enough. If we wish to feast on the bread of heaven, we must do so all our lives. We will never hunger or thirst if we *are always coming* and *always believing* in Christ.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, Translated and Edited by Rev. John Owen, obtained at Christian Classics Ethereal Library, [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org). Calvin states in his *Institutes*: “In the elect alone he implants the living root of faith, so that they persevere even to the end” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3:2.11, obtained at [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org)).

<sup>15</sup> *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 244. He goes on to write: “As we have noted, the Bible teaches that God does not preserve us apart from our watchfulness, prayer, and persevering faith” (Ibid., 245).

<sup>16</sup> *Redemption—Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955), 193.

<sup>17</sup> *Drawn by the Father* (Lindenhurst: Reformation Press, 2000), 19-20.

Reformed Calvinists are essentially in agreement with what Shank has said about saving faith. Hoekema even writes,

On this point I quite agree with Robert Shank when he says,

There is no warrant in the New Testament for that strange at-ease-in-Zion definition of perseverance which assures Christians that perseverance is inevitable and relieves them of the necessity of deliberately persevering in faith, encouraging them to place confidence in some past act or experience.<sup>18</sup>

### **What Reformed Arminians are Saying about Saving Faith**

While Reformed Calvinists and Arminians disagree as to whether God saves people through unconditional election and irresistible grace, they both would agree that saving faith must be a persevering faith. Jacob Arminius (1559-1609), the theological forerunner to modern-day Reformed Arminianism,<sup>19</sup> succinctly wrote that God “wills that they, who believe and persevere in faith, shall be saved, but that those, who are unbelieving and impenitent, shall remain under condemnation.”<sup>20</sup> He goes on to reiterate that God does not will “that any man shall be saved in a sense, such that salvation will, certainly and infallibly, come to him, unless he is considered as a believer, and as persevering in faith even to the end.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Saved by Grace*, 245.

<sup>19</sup> For more on Reformed Arminianism see Roger Olson’s excellent book, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> *The Works of Arminius* (Trans. by James and William Nichols, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 3:412. In another place he writes: “God resolves to receive into favor those who repent and believe, and to save in Christ, on account of Christ, and through Christ, those who persevere, but to leave under sin and wrath those who are impenitent and unbelievers, and to condemn them as aliens from Christ” (Ibid., 2:465). He goes on to explain that God’s determination to save some people and to condemn others “. . . rests or depends on the prescience and foresight of God, by which he foreknew from all eternity what men would, through such administration, believe by the aid of preventing or preceding grace, and would persevere by the aid of subsequent or following grace, and who would not believe and persevere” (Ibid., 2:466).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 3:413.

Over one hundred years later Methodist founder John Wesley (1703-1791) arrived at the same conclusions in his essay “Serious Thoughts Upon the Perseverance of the Saints.” In this work Wesley anticipates and responds to objections raised by Calvinists to his teaching that a believer may fall away from God and perish eternally. The responses reveal Wesley’s firm conviction that a believer remains in a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ through a continuing and enduring faith.

10. “But how can this [teaching that a Christian can fall from God so as to perish everlastingly] be reconciled with the words of the Lord: ‘He that believeth shall be saved?’” [Mark 16:16]

Do you think these words mean, “He that believes” at this moment “shall” certainly and inevitably “be saved?”

If this interpretation be good, then, by all the rules of speech, the other part of the sentence must mean, “He” that does “not believe” at this moment, “shall” certainly and inevitably “be damned.”

Therefore that interpretation cannot be good. The plain meaning, then, of the whole sentence is, “He that believeth,” *if he continue in faith*, “shall be saved; he that believeth not,” *if he continue in unbelief*, “shall be damned.”

11. “But does not Christ say elsewhere, ‘He that believeth hath everlasting life?’ (John 3:36), and ‘He that believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life?’” (v. 24).

I answer, (1.) The love of God is everlasting life. It is, in substance, the life of heaven. Now, everyone that believes, loves God, and therefore, “hath everlasting life.”

(2.) Everyone that believes “is” therefore, “passed from death,” spiritual death, “unto life;” and,

(3.) “Shall not come into condemnation,” *if he endureth in the faith unto the end*; according to our Lord’s own words, “He that endureth unto the end shall be saved [Matt 10:22];”<sup>22</sup> and, “Verily I say unto you, if a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death” (John 8:51).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Joseph Benson (1748-1821) arrives at the same conclusion as Wesley on Matt 10:22:

But be not discouraged at the prospect of these trials, for he that *perseveres in the faith* and practice of the gospel, and who bears constantly and with invincible patience these persecutions, (which my grace is sufficient to enable you all to do,) shall be finally and eternally saved from all sin and misery, into the kingdom and glory of God. (*Commentary on the New Testament: Gospel of Saint Matthew* [Rio: AGES Digital Library, *The Wesleyan Heritage Collection*, 2002], 192, emphasis added).

<sup>23</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Third Edition Complete and Unabridged, 14 Vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001), 10:288, emphasis added.

To understand salvation as being conditional upon a faith that endures to the end inevitably raised another objection encountered by Wesley that warranted a response,

“Nay, but are not ‘all the promises, yea and amen?’” They are firm as the pillars of heavens. Perform the condition, and the promise is sure. Believe, and thou shalt be saved.

“But many promises are absolute and unconditional.” In many, the condition is not expressed. But this does not prove, there is none implied. . . . For example: “This is the Father’s will, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing.” [John 6:39]<sup>24</sup> Most sure, all that God hath given him, or as it is expressed in the next verse, “*every one that believeth on him,*” *namely, to the end,* “he will raise up at the last day, to reign with him forever.” [John 6:40]<sup>25</sup>

“Again: ‘I am the living bread:—If any man eat of this bread,’ (by faith,) ‘he shall live forever.’ (John 6:51.) True; *if he continue to eat thereof.*”<sup>26</sup>

It is no surprise that Wesley admonished believers in one of his sermons to: “Continue to believe in him that loved thee, and gave himself for thee; that bore all thy sins in his own body on the tree; and he saveth thee from all condemnation, by his blood continually applied. Thus it is that we continue in a justified state.”<sup>27</sup> He went on to add,

For, by that faith in his life, death, and intercession for us, *renewed from moment to moment,* we are every whit clean, and there is not only now no condemnation for us . . . . By the same faith we feel the power of Christ every moment resting upon us . . . whereby

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<sup>24</sup> Daniel Whedon (1808-1885): “*I should lose nothing*—There will be no erratic self-will in Christ, darting off from the divine plan; no remissness, no oversight, no failure. All who perseveringly believe in him, he will as faithfully and powerfully save . . . .” (*Commentary on the New Testament: John* [Rio: AGES Digital Library, *The Wesleyan Heritage Collection*, 2002], p. 325).

<sup>25</sup> *Works*, 10:290-91, emphasis added. Joseph Benson wrote: “It is the fixed determination of the Father, to bestow everlasting life on all who persevere in this faith; and therefore, in execution of my Father’s will; *I will raise all such up at the last day*” (*Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of Saint John* [Rio: AGES Digital Library, *The Wesleyan Heritage Collection*, 2002], 103). Whedon:

So long as he performs the condition, so long is he heir of the salvation. When he ceases to be a believer he loses all claim to the divine promise, and all interest *in eternal life*. That he has once believed no longer secures him heaven, any more than the fact that he has once disbelieved secures eternal death. (*Ibid.*, 325)

<sup>26</sup> *Works*, 10:290-91, emphasis added. Wesley simply believed that “God is the Father of them that believe, *so long as they believe*. But the devil is the father of them that believe not, whether they did once believe or no” (*Works*, 10:298, emphasis added).

<sup>27</sup> Sermon: “The Repentance of Believers,” *Works*, 5:167, emphasis added.

we are enabled to continue in spiritual life . . . . *As long as we retain our faith in him, we “draw water out of the wells of salvation.”*<sup>28</sup>

Predictably, present day Reformed Arminian Robert Picirilli views saving faith in the same manner as Arminius and Wesley:

We should also note the tense action of the key verbs in the passage [John 3:16-18], especially in vv. 16, 18. In each instance, negative and positive, the verbs express on-going action (the Greek present participles and subjunctive). Everyone who *is believing* (vs. 16 *is having* eternal life (as also in v. 15). The one who *is believing* (v. 18) is not being (perhaps, “is not going to be”) condemned, while the one who *is not believing* rests under a condemnation already established. Throughout, then, the continuing of a given state is co-extensive with the continuing of faith or unbelief. . . .

Surely this indicates the Scriptural approach to the doctrine of security of the believer. Clear, on the one hand, is the fact that faith, and faith alone, is the condition of salvation. Justification, first and finally, is not by works. But equally clear is the fact that continuing faith is the condition of final salvation (cf. 1 Pet. 1:5; Col. 1:23). Perseverance in salvation, like salvation itself, has faith for its condition.<sup>29</sup>

Is saving faith simply the act of a moment or must the initial decision be perpetually implemented throughout the life of the believer?

## **What Do the Scriptures Say about Saving Faith?**

*In Him* was life, and the life was the Light of men. (John 1:4, NASB)

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will *in Him* have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in *Him* shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through *Him*.” (John 3:14-17, NASB)

“For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted *the Son* to have life in himself.” (John 5:26, NIV)

“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to *me* to have life.” (John 5:39-40, NIV)

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<sup>28</sup> *Works*, 5:167, emphasis added. On 1 Peter 1:5, Wesley commented: “*Who are kept*—The inheritance is reserved; the heirs are kept for it; *by the power of God*—Which worketh all in all; which guards us against all our enemies; *through faith*—Through which alone salvation is both received and retained” (*Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* [Salem: Schmull Publishing Co., 2000], 609).

<sup>29</sup> “Editor’s Note: Doctrine in Jn. 3:16-18,” Jack W. Stallings, *The Randall House Bible Commentary: The Gospel of John* (Nashville: Randall House Publications, 1989), 56.

“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to *the Son* and believes in *him* shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:40, NIV)

“*I am* the bread of life. . . . Whoever eats *my* flesh and drinks *my* blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. . . . Whoever eats *my* flesh and drinks *my* blood remains in *me*, and I in him.” (John 6:48, 54, 56, NIV)

Jesus said to her, “*I am* the resurrection and the life. He who believes in *me* will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in *me* will never die.” (John 11:25-26, NIV)

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life *in his name*. (John 20:31, NIV)

Anyone who believes in *the Son of God* has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is *in His Son*. He who has *the Son* has the life; he who does not have *the Son of God* does not have the life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of *the Son of God* so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:10-13, NIV)

The italicized words emphasize that Jesus, the Son of God, is the *source* of eternal life (cf. Heb 5:8-9),<sup>30</sup> but what is the *condition* for possessing the life that the eternal God has promised “in His Son?” It is time to look more closely at some of the above passages that bear directly on this issue.

### **Saving Faith in John 3:15-16**

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. (NIV)

Evangelical commentator J. Ramsey Michaels makes an important observation about verse 15 that is obscured by the NIV and may have been missed by the average reader:

Only here in John’s gospel is the Greek preposition *en* [“in”] used with the verb *pisteuein* “to believe.” Everywhere else the preposition *eis* (“into”) or a dative without a preposition is used. It is therefore likely that “in” goes with the expression “to have life”

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<sup>30</sup> Hebrews 5:8-9, “Although being a Son, he learned obedience from [the things] which he suffered. And having been made perfect, he became to all the ones obeying him [the] source of eternal salvation” (*The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*, Translators Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort [Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990]).

rather than with “believe”: “so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”<sup>31</sup>

Other respected commentators have reached the same conclusions,<sup>32</sup> and some translations make the connection of *in Him* with *having eternal life* more obvious.

“that whosoever believeth may *in him* have eternal life.” (ASV)

“so that whoever believes will *in Him* have eternal life.” (NASB)

“so that everyone who believes may *have eternal life in him.*” (NJB)

“So that everyone who believes can *have eternal life in him.*” (NCV)

Legendary Greek scholar A. T. Robertson brings up a significant insight about the verb “have” in this verse which is missed in our English translations. In the Greek *have* is a “present active subjunctive” which he translates as: “that he may keep on having eternal life.”<sup>33</sup> So what is the *condition* for a person to keep on having eternal life “in him”—“i.e., in union or in connection with him?”<sup>34</sup> Lutheran scholar Richard Lenski says,

The [Greek] present tense [verb *ho pisteuōn*, “the believing”] describes the person by its durative [i.e., continuing] action. . . . The verb [*echē*, “have”] *matches* the durative [*pisteuōn*, “believing”]. The believer has life the moment he believes and as long as he believes; he is not compelled to wait until he enters heaven. . . . Nothing dead can give itself life, least of all that life which has its source in the Son of God himself. . . . And this life is “eternal,”. . . While its nature is “eternal” and deathlessness, it may be lost during our stay in this sinful world, but only by a willful and wicked cutting of the bond “in him,” a deliberate renunciation and destruction of faith.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *New International Biblical Commentary: John* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984, 1989), 61-62.

<sup>32</sup> So A. T. Robertson: “*en autōi* (in him) is taken with *echēi* [‘have’] rather than with *pisteuōn* [‘believes’]” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 Vols. [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930], 5:50). F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983), 89; D. A. Carson, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to John* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 202; Robert H. Mounce, *The Expositors Bible Commentary: John*, Rev. Edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 10:398, 399. George Allen Turner and Julius R. Mantey, *The Evangelical Commentary: The Gospel According to John* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 97-98.

<sup>33</sup> *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 5:49. He goes on to say, “It is more than endless [life], for it is sharing in the life of God in Christ (5:26; 17:3; 1 John 5:12)” (*Ibid.*, 5:50).

<sup>34</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament: The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers Edition, 2001), 257.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257-58.

Reformed and Moderate Calvinists would disagree with Lenski's concluding remarks, but they naturally follow from what Jesus has said. Since Jesus is the source of eternal life, then a person keeps on having life "in him" as long as they *continue believing*. Of course, this believing is directed toward an object—the Son of Man who will be lifted up on the cross. Jesus goes on to say in v. 16-17:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. (NASB)

God gave his Son so that the world might not perish, but be saved through him. What kind of faith placed in Christ prevents a person from perishing and results in them being saved and having eternal life? Calvinist Andy P. Stanley answers,

The most well-known verse in the entire Bible is undoubtedly John 3:16 . . . . Yet while it is well-known, it may well be the least understood. Most probably think this verse is expressing the need for a simple confession of faith in Jesus to receive eternal life, that thus we believe *once* and have eternal life.

Virtually all commentators on John's Gospel, though, would agree that in keeping with the Greek present tense and John's theology, John 3:16 in fact means, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever *continues to believe* in him shall not perish but have eternal life."<sup>36</sup>

George Allen Turner and Julius R. Mantey are a couple of commentators who agree with Stanley's understanding of the Greek present tense verb *believe* in John 3:16. They write:

In the New Testament, when belief is said to lead to eternal life, as is the case here [John 3:16], the [Greek present] tense expressing continuous action is always used . . . . The stress is thus placed on continuous faith rather on an isolated moment of faith.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Salvation Is More Complicated Than You Think: A Study on the Teachings of Jesus* (Colorado Springs: Authentic Publishing, 2007), 165-66. It should be noted that Stanley affirms that it is not possible for a genuine Christian to commit apostasy, but he does maintain that perseverance in faith is necessary to remain in a saving relationship with Christ.

<sup>37</sup> *The Gospel According to John*, 99.

Commentator Paul T. Butler says: “We must note that the promise of eternal life is to whosoever *continues* to believe in the Son. The word ‘believe’ is in the Greek present tense, and indicates continued action.”<sup>38</sup> J. Rodman Williams, in his Systematic Theology textbook *Renewal Theology*, notes: “In Greek the present tense often means duration, thus the sense here would be ‘whoever believes, and keeps on believing.’”<sup>39</sup>

From what we have read from various commentators/scholars on John 3:15-16, it is evident that saving faith involves a continuing trust in Jesus Christ.<sup>40</sup>

### **Saving Faith in John 20:31**

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in (*en*) his name. (John 20:31, NIV)<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *The Gospel of John: A New Commentary, Workbook, Teaching Manual* (Joplin: College Press, 1961), 112. Reformed commentator William Hendriksen said: “The present participle of this verb [believe] with the preposition *eis*, in . . . = *exercising living faith in* the person of Christ” (*New Testament Commentary: The Gospel of John*, 2 Vols. in One [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953], 1:141 fn. 83).

<sup>39</sup> *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective, Three Vols. in One* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 2:129 fn. 41. My theology professor, Dr. Wesley Gerig, was the first person to bring to my attention the significance of the Greek present tense verb for believing in the NT when he shared with the class his own translation of John 3:16, “For so God loved the world, so that His unique Son He gave, in order that everyone who continues believing on Him may not perish but may continue having eternal life.” Dr. Gerig was Professor of Bible and Theology and taught Hebrew and Greek classes at the same college for 51 years (the college underwent name changes from Fort Wayne Bible College to Summit Christian College, and finally to Taylor University Fort Wayne). He was one of the 100+ translators used to produce the New International Version in 1978. I appreciated him taking the time to send me via e-mail (8/20/2009) several updated translations of several verses used in this article.

<sup>40</sup> Craig S. Keener states: “Modern readers of 3:15-16 who assume that it rewards passive faith with eternal life, apart from perseverance, read these verses in accordance with a very modern theological understanding that is utterly foreign to their Johannine context” (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 Vols. [Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004], 1:570). So G. R. Beasley-Murray:

Self-evidently the hallmark of the church in the Fourth Gospel is faith in the Son of God, who was sent from God to be the Revealer and Redeemer of humankind (John 3:16). Such faith, however, goes beyond a simple profession made in the presence of others; the Gospel emphasizes the necessity of continuing in faith and adhering to the word of Christ. (*The Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel* [Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991], 107)

<sup>41</sup> Dr. Gerig’s translation: “but these things stand written in order that you continue believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and in order that, because you are continuing to believe, life you may continue having in His name.” (John 20:31)

Notice that John employs the same preposition “in” (*en*), and uses the equivalent expression to the “in him” phrase that Jesus used in John 3:15. J. Ramsey Michaels notes: “The phrase . . . (lit. ‘in his name’) goes with the possession of eternal life, not with the act of believing (cf. note on 3:15; what seems to be true there is even more clearly the case in the present passage).”<sup>42</sup> Lenski states, “The preposition [*en*, in] should be left in its native sense: ‘in union, in vital connection with, his Name.’”<sup>43</sup> Calvinist W. H. Griffith Thomas agrees:

The sphere in which life becomes ours and is enjoyed by us is found in the words “in His name.” . . . The name stands . . . for the revealed character and will of God in Christ. Thus, to have life in His name is to have it *in union* with what we know of Him and of His manifested character and revealed will. Life is thus “in Christ” and not outside or apart from Him.<sup>44</sup>

A. T. Robertson brings up another significant insight concerning the Greek verbs for “believing” and “have” in verse 31:

Note the [Greek] present participle *pisteuontes* (continuing to believe) and the present active subjunctive *echēte* (keep on having). “Life” (*zōēn*) is eternal life so often mentioned in this Gospel, life to be found only in the name (and power) of Jesus Christ the Son of God.<sup>45</sup>

Again, saving faith is a continuing or persevering faith. A person keeps on having eternal life “in him” or “in his name” as long as they are continuing to trust in Jesus Christ the Son of God. This same teaching is taught in John’s first epistle.

### **Saving Faith in 1 John 5:10-13**

He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given

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<sup>42</sup> *A Good News Commentary: John* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), 336.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1398.

<sup>44</sup> “The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125 (July-Sept) 1968: 261-62, emphasis added.

<sup>45</sup> *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 5:317.

of His Son. 11 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:10-13, NKJV)

D. Edmond Hiebert nicely explains John's teaching here:

Individuals respond either positively or negatively to God's witness. The results are crucial. Positively, "The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself." The [Greek present] participle, "the one who believes" . . . portrays the individual as exercising a *continuing faith centered on the Son of God*. The verb "believe," occurring thrice in this verse, embodies the essence of man's response to God's witness. It involves not merely an acceptance of the truthfulness of the message but also a personal trust in or committal to the One to whom witness is borne. The expression "believes in the Son" . . . pictures faith as moving toward and resting on the Son. Such a personal committal to the incarnate Son of God is central to the Christian faith. A result of such faith is that the believer "has the witness in himself" . . . he possesses it as an inner reality.

. . . The further assertion, "and this life is in His Son" . . . "relates not only to his bestowal of life, but also to the fact that the sole medium of its bestowal is to be found *in Jesus*." This view enriches the content of the message and underlines the importance of adhering to the apostolic message concerning the incarnate Son. Our relationship with the Son is crucial. As Boice points out, "It is as impossible to have life without having Christ as it is impossible to have Christ without at the same time possessing eternal life." To be united with the incarnate Son of God is to be united with the Father who sent Him (Rom. 6:23; 2 Tim. 1:1).

The positive and negative statements in verse 12 stress that eternal life is inseparably related to God's Son and personally obtained only *in union with Him*. Positively, "he who has the Son has the life." The present tenses mark this possession of life as a present reality. It is only through this close and *living union* between Christ and the believer that eternal life can be experienced.<sup>46</sup>

Hiebert finishes his comments on v. 13 in writing:

John's stated purpose in writing is "in order that you may know that you have eternal life." . . . His aim was to strengthen and deepen the assurance they already had. . . . The content of this assured knowledge is . . . literally, "that life ye are having eternal"). . . . The present tense verb asserts that the readers already are in possession of this life. . . . The present tense articular participle ([*tois pisteuousin*], "to those believing") designates a definite group characterized by a *living faith* uniting them with the Son of God. This faith assures them of eternal life . . . . This 10th and last occurrence of the verb "believe" in this epistle again shows that an active faith is foundational to true Christianity.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> "An Exposition of 1 John 5:1-12," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (April-June) 1990: 228-30.

<sup>47</sup> "An Exposition of 1 John 5:13-21," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (July-Sept) 1990: 312, emphasis added.

The evidence thus far from the Scriptures is strongly in favor of understanding eternal life as a present possession experienced in *living union* with God’s Son, to the ones exercising a *continuing faith* centered on the Son of God. Since the Scriptures explicitly confirm this, it would be safe to conclude that refusal to place ones faith in God’s Son, or failing to persevere in a faith centered on the Son of God, would necessarily carry the same consequence—no possession of eternal life or saving relationship with Jesus Christ.<sup>48</sup>

### **Who Has or Possesses Eternal Life?**

In the Gospel of John, Jesus confronts some Jews who stubbornly refuse to place their faith in him who is the source of life (cf. John 5:26):

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you *possess* (*echō*) eternal life. 40 These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to *have* (*echō*) life. (5:39-40, NIV).

You may have noticed that the NIV does not translate “have” as *possess* in verse 40 as it did in verse 39. In every clear instance where the Scriptures describe who is presently *having or possessing eternal life*, it is always the person *believing or trusting* in Jesus, the Son of God.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> So Keener: “Faith in the Father (through his agent Jesus, 5:24; 12:44) and the Son (1:12; 3:15, 16, 18, 36; 6:35, 40, 47; 7:38-39; 8:24; 11:25-26; 12:36, 46; 16:27; 17:8; cf. 6:29) is the precondition for salvation, but in the context of the Fourth Gospel, salvation is guaranteed only if one perseveres in such faith” (Ibid., 1:327).

<sup>49</sup> Once, in John 5:24, the person who is *possessing* eternal life is the one *believing in the Father* who sent his Son. Keener writes:

John often speaks of ‘life’ (5:25, 26, 29; 6:33, 57, 63; 11:26; 14:6, 19; 17:3; 20:31; cf. 4:50; 6:44) or of ‘eternal life’ (3:15, 16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:21, 24, 39, 40; 6:27, 40, 47, 48; 6:51, 53, 54, 58, 68; 8:12; 10:10, 28; 11:25; 12:25, 50; 17:2); although Judaism typically understood this as a future experience, John applies present tense verbs to it (3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:47, 54; cf. 14:19), connecting

Consider the essentially literal translations that I have provided of the following verses where “has, have” (*echō*) specifically appears with “life” (*zōē*) or “eternal life” (*aiōnios zōē*).<sup>50</sup> I have consistently translated *echō* as *possess* or *possessing*.<sup>51</sup>

“And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone *believing* shall be *possessing eternal life* in Him. For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone *believing* in Him shall not perish, but shall be *possessing eternal life*.” (John 3:14-16)

“The one *believing* in the Son is *possessing eternal life*; but the one disobeying the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God is remaining on him.” (John 3:36)

“For this is the will of the One having sent me, that everyone looking to the Son and *believing* in Him shall be *possessing eternal life*, and I will raise him up on the last day.” (John 6:40)<sup>52</sup>

“Truly, truly, I say to you, the one *believing* [in me] is *possessing eternal life*.” (John 6:47)

Then again Jesus spoke to them saying, “I am the Light of the world. The one *following* me shall by no means walk in the darkness, but shall *possess the Light of life*.” (John 8:12)<sup>53</sup>

“But these have been written so that you shall believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that *believing* you shall be *possessing life* in His name.” (John 20:31)

The one *believing* in the Son of God *possesses* the witness in himself, the one not believing God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony which

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it with faith (3:15, 16, 36; 6:27-29, 40, 47; 11:25, 26; 20:31) and following (8:12) in the present [tense]. (Ibid., 1:385)

<sup>50</sup> I have consulted several literal translations and evangelical commentaries in my translation.

<sup>51</sup> *The New English Bible* translates *echō* as “possess” or “possesses” in John 3:15; 6:40, 47, 54; 20:31; 1 John 5:12. Raymond E. Brown, in his own translation, uses “possess” or “possesses” in 1 John 2:23 (2x); 5:10, 12 (4x); 13, 14; 2 John 9 (2x) (see *The Anchor Bible: The Epistles of John* [Garden City: Doubleday, 1982]). So Stephen S. Smalley: 1 John 2:23 (2x); 5:10, 12 (2x); 13; 2 John 9 (2x) (*Word Biblical Commentary: 1, 2, 3 John* [Waco: Word Books, 1984]). Authors of the *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* give the following definition for *echō*: “bearing or possessing abstract qualities, spiritual gifts, and powers *have, possess, enjoy* (JN 3.16)” (Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, Neva F. Miller [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000], 184).

<sup>52</sup> Dr. Gerig’s translation: “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone continuing to behold the Son and continuing to believe on Him is continuing to have eternal life and I myself shall raise him in the last day.”

<sup>53</sup> Dr. Gerig’s translation: “Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I myself am the light of the world; the one who continues following me will never walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life.’” Following Jesus is synonymous to trusting in Jesus.

God has testified concerning the Son of Him. And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life, and this life is in the Son of Him. The one *possessing* the Son is *possessing life*; the one not *possessing* the Son of God is not *possessing life*. These things I wrote to you that you may know that you are *possessing eternal life*, to the ones *believing* in the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:10-13)

According to these passages, and contrary to the Moderate Calvinists’ opinion, *one’s faith must be maintained in Christ to ensure the possession of eternal life.*

### **Saving Faith in John 6:54, 56**

[Jesus said] “The one eating My flesh and drinking My blood is possessing eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” (My translation)

In this context, “eating and drinking” are metaphors for “looking and believing.”<sup>54</sup>

Comparing verse 54 and 40 brings this out:

<u>verse</u>	<u>action</u>	<u>object</u>	<u>promises</u>
54	<i>eating and drinking</i>	Christ	= possessing eternal life, I will raise up on the last day
40	<i>looking and believing</i>	Christ	= possessing eternal life, I will raise up on the last day

Since the promises are the same, “the conclusion is obvious: the former is the metaphorical way of referring to the latter.”<sup>55</sup> According to A. T. Robertson, the verb for *eating* is a “Present active participle for *continual or habitual eating . . .*”<sup>56</sup> Lenski says, “We may read [*ho trōgōn kai pinōn*, the one eating and drinking] like [*ho pisteuōn*, the one believing] with regard to a quality conveyed by continuous action: eating and

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<sup>54</sup> Lenski says, “If the point of comparison is asked for, it is simply that eating and drinking, like believing, is a receiving of the most intimate and vital kind. As eating and drinking receive food to be assimilated in the body, so believing receives Christ with the atonement made through his sacrificial flesh and blood” (Ibid., 494).

<sup>55</sup> Carson, 297. So J. Carl Laney, *The Moody Gospel Commentary: John* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 131; Colin G. Kruse, *Tyndale New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to John* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 175. I would add that the metaphors of “eating and drinking” are equivalent to “coming” and “believing” in John 6:35, since they correspond so well with the words “hunger and thirst”: “And Jesus said to them, I am the Bread of life; the *one* coming to Me will not hunger, not *ever*; and the one believing into Me will not thirst, not *ever*” (*KJ3 Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green, Sr. obtained at [www.sgpbooks.com/bibles/LiteralPages](http://www.sgpbooks.com/bibles/LiteralPages)).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 5:111, emphasis added.

drinking and going on in these actions”<sup>57</sup> Only those who *continue* to partake of the Bread of Life by faith are possessing eternal life and can be assured of being raised up on the last day. Christ goes on to use the same metaphors in verse 56:

“The one eating My flesh and drinking My blood is abiding/remaining<sup>58</sup> in Me, and I in him.” (My translation)

We have already seen from John 3:15; 20:31; and 1 John 5:11 that eternal life is possessed “in (*en*) the Son” (i.e., in union with him), to those continuing to exercise a faith centered on the Son of God. Here Jesus says that the one eating and drinking (believing) is “abiding in (*en*) Me, and I in (*en*) him.” What does “abiding in Me” refer to? The answer becomes obvious as we compare verses 54 and 56:

<u>verse</u>	<u>action</u>	<u>object</u>	<u>promises</u>
54	eating & drinking	Bread of Life =	is possessing eternal life, I will raise him up on the last day
56	eating & drinking	Bread of Life =	is abiding/remaining in Me, and I in him

Since *abiding in Christ* is parallel with *possessing eternal life*, and since the *condition* for each is identical, then *abiding in Christ can mean nothing less than remaining in a life-giving union or saving relationship with Jesus Christ*. Without trust there can be no union with Christ, without union there can be no possession of eternal life since life is experienced only “in him.” A person receives eternal life and is united with Christ the moment they partake of (or trust in) the Bread of Life. Believers remain in a life-giving

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 493.

<sup>58</sup> Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III: “[**menei**, “abide”] pres. ind[icative] . . . Pres. indicates a continual abiding” (*The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998], 198).

relationship with Christ, and in possession of eternal life, as long as they continue eating (trusting) the Bread of Life.<sup>59</sup>

The figurative language of “eating and drinking” definitely suggests *dependence upon*. Just as a person’s physical life is nourished and sustained by eating and drinking so, in a similar way, the believer’s spiritual life is nourished and sustained by continually partaking of the Bread of Life. However, “the figure is less than the reality, for bodily eating only sustains life already present while spiritual eating or believing expels death, bestows life, and sustains that life forever. . . . Our living is conditional on our receiving Jesus . . . .”<sup>60</sup>

The Scriptural evidence has been decidedly in favor of Shank’s thesis—eternal life in Christ is our present possession on the condition of a present living faith. In the passages surveyed, scholars were quoted who brought to the readers’ attention that the Greek present tense verb for “believing,” along with its metaphorical parallel “eating and drinking,” expressed *continuing action*. This provided further confirmation that a person’s present possession of eternal life and saving relationship with Christ is *conditional* upon a persevering or living faith in him who is the source of life.

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<sup>59</sup> Compare my conclusions with what Calvinist J. Carl Laney and Robert H. Mounce say:

The present tense of verbs “eat” and “drink” point to a continuing appropriation. The present tense of ‘remains’ (*menō*) suggests a continuous relationship (cf. John 1:32-33; 14:10). The focus of this term is on the union of the believer with Christ. The relationship between Christ and the believer is depicted as a spiritual union involving a continuous, mutual indwelling. (Ibid., 132)

Mounce: “Note here that the eating and drinking is put in the present tense, which stresses its continuing quality. Those who make it a practice of eating and drinking the flesh and blood of Jesus sustain that personal relationship” (Ibid., 10:450).

<sup>60</sup> Lenski, 494, 501.

## Doesn't John 5:24 Support Unconditional Security?

Robert Shank wrote:

Perhaps no verse has been more cited in evidence by advocates of unconditional security than has John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

"Please underscore the words 'hath everlasting life'," say the advocates of unconditional security. Indeed! But please underscore also the words "he that heareth . . . and believeth," for they denote the condition governing the promise of everlasting life and deliverance from condemnation and death. And the hearing and believing of which Jesus spoke are not the act of a moment. . . . [One must take] into account the durative [continuous] quality of the present participles *akouōn* ["hearing"] and *pisteuōn* ["believing"] . . .

Contrary to the assumption of many, John 5:24 does not present a privileged position which, once attained, is forever irrevocable. . . . Jesus declares that the happy circumstance of deliverance from present condemnation and of standing passed out of death into life is the privilege only of such as habitually hear His word and believe the Father. It is only on the basis of present hearing and believing that one shares the eternal life of God and enjoys deliverance from present condemnation and spiritual death. [Henry] Alford declares, "The *pisteuōn* ["believing"] and the *echei z[ōēn] ai[ōnion]* ["hath life everlasting"] are *commensurate*; where the faith is, the possession of eternal life is; and when the one remits, the other is forfeited."<sup>61</sup>

Moderate Calvinists are familiar with Shank's argument concerning the Greek present tense verb associated with believing in this context and others, but what have they offered by way of rebuttal?

### Charles Stanley, Believing, and the Greek Present Tense

. . . Some people argue that the believer must maintain his *faith* in order to maintain his *salvation*. The primary support for this view comes from the apostle John's use of the [Greek] present tense in connection with the term *believe*, for example.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever *believes* may in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever *believes* in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

—John 3:14-16, *emphasis added*;  
see also 3:18; 5:24; 6:29, 6:40

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<sup>61</sup> *Life in the Son*, 60, 61. Dr. Gerig's translation: "Truly, truly I am saying to you, that the one who continues hearing my word and continues believing on the One who sent Me continues having eternal life and into judgment is not going to come, but has passed over out of death into life."

Those who subscribe to this argument understand the [Greek] present tense to denote continuous, uninterrupted action. In other words, they understand John 3:16 to read, “That *whoever keeps on believing* in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” The implication is that “whoever does not keep on believing will not have eternal life” or “will lose eternal life.”

There are several problems with this argument. The first one has to do with their understanding of the present tense. This argument restricts the meaning of the present tense.

If someone were to ask me sometime this week, “Charles, what are you doing in your spare time these days,” I might respond, “Well, I’m writing a book and working in my darkroom.” In my response I used progressive forms of two present tense verbs, *writing* and *working*. But no one would ascertain from my answer that in my spare time I am writing and working in my darkroom at the same time. Neither would the understanding be that I am saying, “I don’t eat, sleep, talk to my wife, or answer the phone in my spare time; [because] I am continuously writing and working in my dark room.”

The normal use of the present tense does not denote continuous, uninterrupted action. Certainly it can, but it does not have to. If you were to ask me where I lived, I might say, “I live in Atlanta.” In that case the present tense *live* would imply a continuous action. But even then, if you saw me somewhere other than Atlanta, you would not accuse me of lying. Why? Because that is not the way the present tense is used in real life.<sup>62</sup>

### **John 3:16 in the Greek New Testament**

Before I respond in more detail to Stanley’s comments on the Greek present tense, it should be pointed out that a person does not have to know Greek in order to understand that Jesus never intended to convey that *one moment of faith* secures one’s possession of eternal life forever. English-only readers can go to a local bookstore or Christian college library and pull off the shelf any one of a number of Greek-English Interlinear translations of the New Testament that translate the Greek present participial verb *pisteuō* as “believing.” Consider the following evidence from the last part of John 3:16:

**ινα πας ο πιστων εις αυτον μη αποληται αλλ εχη ζωην αιωνιον [Greek]**  
*hina pas ho pisteuōn eis auton mē apolētai all echē zōēn aiōnion [Transliteration]*  
 that everyone the believing on him not may perish but may have life eternal [English]<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Charles Stanley, *Ibid.*, 84-85. Geisler has responded in essentially the same manner (*Ibid.*, 85-87). This is not surprising since Geisler recommends his readers to see Stanley’s comments on understanding the Greek present tense for believing in chapter 9 of Stanley’s book on eternal security (*Ibid.*, 85, fn. 28).

<sup>63</sup> *The New Testament Study Bible John*, Greek-English Interlinear, Editor Stanley M. Horton (Springfield: The Complete Biblical Library, 1988).

ινα πας ο πιστων εις αυτον μη αποληται αλλ εχη ζωην αιωνιον  
that everyone - believing in him may not perish but have life eternal<sup>64</sup>

ινα πας ο πιστων εις αυτον μη αποληται αλλ εχη ζωην αιωνιον  
that everyone believing into him not may perish, but may have life everlasting<sup>65</sup>

ινα πας ο πιστων εις αυτον μη αποληται αλλ εχη ζωην αιωνιον  
that everyone believing into him not may perish, but may have life everlasting<sup>66</sup>

ινα πας ο πιστων εις αυτον μη αποληται αλλ εχη ζωην αιωνιον  
that every - one believing in Him not should perish but should have life eternal<sup>67</sup>

ινα πας ο πιστων εις αυτον μη αποληται αλλ εχη ζωην αιωνιον  
that every - one trusting in Him not should perish but should have life eternal<sup>68</sup>

One could also search the internet and find other works that provide a *literal translation* of the NT which yield the same results:

“that every one who is believing in him may not perish, but may have life age-during.”  
(*Young’s Literal Translation of the New Testament*, by Robert Young)<sup>69</sup>

“that everyone believing into Him should not perish, but may have everlasting life.”  
(*KJ3 Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green Sr.)<sup>70</sup>

so that everyone believing in him not perish but be having eternal zoe-life.  
(*Faithful New Testament* by William Zeitler)<sup>71</sup>

“so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be having eternal life!”  
(*Analytical-Literal Translation of the New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition by Gary F. Zeolla)<sup>72</sup>

Without any knowledge of Greek the English reader can discover for themselves that having eternal life is *conditional* upon the one trusting in Christ. With this being the case,

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<sup>64</sup> *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*, Translators: Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990).

<sup>65</sup> *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, Third Edition. Gen. Editor and Translator Jay P. Green, Sr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1984, 1996).

<sup>66</sup> *The Interlinear NASB-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English*, Interlinear Translation by Alfred Marshall (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993).

<sup>67</sup> *The NKJV Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*, Translators: Arthur L. Farstad, Zane C. Hodges, C. Michael Moss, Robert E. Picirilli, Wilbur N. Pickering (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994).

<sup>68</sup> *The Word Study Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*, Editor Paul R. McReynolds (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999).

<sup>69</sup> See [www.olivetree.com/bible](http://www.olivetree.com/bible) under “Young’s Literal Translation.” Young’s translation came out in 1862 and was revised in 1887 and 1898.

<sup>70</sup> See [www.sgpbooks.com/bibles/LiteralPages](http://www.sgpbooks.com/bibles/LiteralPages).

<sup>71</sup> See [www.faithfulbible.com](http://www.faithfulbible.com).

<sup>72</sup> Brackets are Zeolla’s. You can purchase his translation in an e-book for \$3.75 at [www.dtl.org](http://www.dtl.org).

what can be said about Stanley’s understanding of the Greek present tense?

First, Stanley says that to argue that the Greek present tense refers to continuous, uninterrupted action “restricts the meaning of the present tense.” This simply is not the case since those who hold this position are not saying that the present tense, whenever it is used in the NT, *always* means continuous action. Depending on the context the Greek present tense may be used to describe a different kind of action, but the context in which “believes” is used in our modern translations or “believing” in our literal translations, naturally refers to *continuous action*. This is confirmed by observing the following promises made to both the *believing* and the *unbelieving/disobeying* in John 3:18 and 36:

The one <i>believing</i> in Him is not condemned	the one <i>not believing</i> has already been condemned (v. 18)
The one <i>believing</i> in the Son is possessing eternal life	the one <i>disobeying</i> the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God is remaining on him (v. 36) <sup>73</sup>

Both verbs in 3:18 for *believing* are Greek present participles representing “continuous believing marking the one man, continuous non-believing the other.”<sup>74</sup> In v. 36 *believing* and *disobeying* are present participles as well.<sup>75</sup> Since the grammar of the two is identical then they must be interpreted in the same way. If Stanley wants to argue, as he does, that after *one* moment of faith a person possesses eternal life *forever* even if he/she later on *becomes an unbeliever*; then he must also argue that after *one* moment of

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<sup>73</sup> My translations.

<sup>74</sup> Lenski, 267.

<sup>75</sup> So Raymond E. Brown: “Notice the present tenses, ‘believes,’ ‘disobeys’; John is not thinking of a single act but of a pattern of life” (*The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John*, 2 Vols. [Garden City: Doubleday, 1970], 1:162). Frank Pack: “The words translated **believes** (*pisteuōn*) and **does not obey** (*apeithōn*) are both present participles and express the continuing pattern of one’s life” (*The Gospel According to John*, 2 Vols. [Austin: Sweet Publishing Co., 1975], 1:69).

unbelief/disobedience a person is condemned *forever* to spend eternity in hell even if he/she later on *becomes a believer*. It is highly unlikely that this is what the author intended to communicate.

All 3:18, 36 means is that the person who remains as one of the unbelieving or disobeying will inevitably share the destiny promised to them. Likewise, the person who remains as one of the believing will inevitably share the destiny promised to them. Since the promises of condemnation/wrath and no eternal life to unbelievers does not mean that an unbeliever can never change his future destiny by becoming a believer, then the promises of no condemnation and possession of eternal life to a believer also does not mean that he can never change his future destiny by becoming an unbeliever.<sup>76</sup> Just as saving faith is not simply the act of a moment, but the attitude of a life, so condemning unbelief/disobedience is not simply the act of a moment but the attitude of a life as well.

Stanley's faulty conclusions concerning the Greek present tense are a direct result of failing to interpret in context the passages where "believing" is put in contrast to the "unbelieving/disobeying." Nevertheless, Stanley goes on to argue,

The normal use of the [Greek] present tense does not denote continuous, uninterrupted action. Certainly it can, but it does not have to. If you were to ask me where I lived, I might say, "I live in Atlanta." In that case the present tense *live* would imply a continuous action. But even then, if you saw me somewhere other than Atlanta, you

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<sup>76</sup> In the preceding two paragraphs I am indebted to Dr. Robert Picirilli's "Editor's Note on John 5:24: Do Promises to Believers Guarantee their Security?" *Ibid.*, 85-86. Stephen H. Travis says,

For John, more sharply than for any other New Testament writer, people are divided into two groups with two destinies – those who are for Christ and those against him. Even so, the groups are not fixed and unchangeable. The unbeliever may still believe and cross over from death to life [John 5:24]. And – in principle at least – the believer may cease to maintain a relationship with Christ and ultimately be 'thrown away' [John 15:6]. (*Christ and the Judgment of God: The Limits of Divine Retribution in New Testament Thought* [Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008], 274)

would not accuse me of lying. Why? Because that is not the way the present tense is used in real life.

This argument and illustration is irrelevant since my concern is not with how the Greek present tense is used in *the English language* and thus in “real life.” I am trying to determine whether a present tense verb *in the Greek language can convey continuous action*. Stanley admits that it can, but argues that this is not its “normal” usage. Unfortunately, Stanley does not provide the reader any evidence from Greek reference works to support his view?<sup>77</sup> Common sense would suggest that that this would be a good place to start.

### **Greek Grammarians and the Greek Present Tense**

Daniel B. Wallace has produced a highly respected work called *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*.<sup>78</sup> He presently teaches Greek at Dallas Theological Seminary, an institution known for its belief in eternal security. Wallace is in line with what the Seminary ascribes to, yet he does not hold that a person can stop trusting in Christ and still be in possession of eternal life as Stanley argues. This will become apparent as we proceed further.

Allow me to summarize the *specific uses* Wallace gives of the Greek present tense with their *definitions* and urge the reader to consult his textbook for the complete *definition*,

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<sup>77</sup> Stanley’s Seminary training (bachelor of divinity degree from Southwestern Theological Seminary, and his master’s and doctor’s degrees from Luther Rice Seminary) would have required him to study Greek, so it is surprising to find no comments from Greek reference works that would substantiate his views.

<sup>78</sup> Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.

key to identification, and Scriptural *illustrations* or examples provided.<sup>79</sup> Depending on the context, the Greek present tense may be used . . .

- to indicate that an action is completed at the *moment* of speaking—**Instantaneous Present**. It is relatively common.
- to describe a scene in progress, especially in narrative literature—**Progressive Present (or Descriptive Present)**. The progressive present is common.<sup>80</sup>
- to describe an action which, begun in the past, continues in the present—**Extending-from-Past Present (Present of Past Action Still in Progress)**. The emphasis is on the present time. Depending on how tightly one defines this category, its usage is either relatively rare or fairly common.
- to describe an event that *repeatedly* happens—**Iterative Present**. It is frequently found in the imperative mood,<sup>81</sup> since an action is urged to be done. The iterative present is common.<sup>82</sup>
- to make a statement of a general, timeless fact—**Gnomic Present**. “It does not say that something *is* happening, but that something *does* happen.” The action or state continues without time limits. The verb is used “in proverbial statements or general maxims about what occurs at *all* times.” This usage is common.<sup>83</sup>

Wallace’s definition of the **Customary (Habitual or General) Present** is particularly significant for our study:

The customary present is used to signal either an action that *regularly occurs* or an *ongoing state*. The action is usually *iterative*, or repeated, but not without interruption. This usage is quite common.

The difference between the customary (proper) and the iterative present is mild. Generally, however, it can be said that the *customary* present is *broader* in its idea of the “present” time and describes an event that occurs *regularly*. . . . The two types of customary present are lexically determined: One is repeated action (habitual present [*customarily*, *habitually*]), while the other is ongoing state (stative present [*continually*]).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> On pages 526-529, Wallace discusses the *special uses of the present tense* which have no impact on the issue at hand.

<sup>80</sup> Wallace says, “The difference between this and the iterative (and customary) present is that the latter involves a *repeated* action, while the progressive present normally involves *continuous* action” (Ibid., 518).

<sup>81</sup> Wallace: “the imperative is most often used to make a *command*” and “is commonly used to forbid an action” [for example] Rom 6:12 “Do not let sin reign in your mortal” (Ibid., 486-87).

<sup>82</sup> Wallace says, “This use of the [iterative] present is different from the customary present in terms of time frame and regularity. The intervals are shorter with the iterative, and less regular. However, several passages are difficult to analyze and could conceivably fit in either category” (Ibid., 520).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 516-25, emphasis is his.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 521-22, brackets are from Wallace.

Interestingly, John 3:16 is one of the clear examples that Wallace provides for the

### Customary Present:

Everyone who [continually] **believes** in him should not perish

This could also be taken as a gnomic present, but if so it is not a proverbial statement, nor is it simply a general maxim. In this Gospel, there seems to be a qualitative distinction between the ongoing act of believing and the simple fact of believing.<sup>85</sup>

Wallace again uses John 3:16 as one of his biblical examples, but this time he focuses on *believes* as a “present participle.” *Believes* occurs numerous times in the Gospel of John and in the rest of the New Testament as a present participle.<sup>86</sup> In his textbook, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar*,<sup>87</sup> William D. Mounce writes: “The present participle is built on the present tense stem of the verb. It describes a continuous action. It will often be difficult to carry this ‘on-going’ nuance into your translation, but this must be the foremost consideration in your mind.”<sup>88</sup> Wallace brings out this “on-going nuance” in his translation of John 3:16,

everyone **who believes**

The idea seems to be both gnomic and continual: “everyone who continually believes.” This is not due to the present tense only, but to the use of the present participle of [*pisteuōn*], especially in soteriological [i.e., salvation] contexts in the NT.<sup>89</sup>

In his footnotes Wallace goes on to elaborate,

The aspectual force of the present [participle for “the believing”] seems to be in contrast with [the aorist participle for “the having believed”]. . . . The present [participle for believe] occurs six times as often (43 times) [in comparison to the aorist], most often in

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 522, brackets are from Wallace.

<sup>86</sup> John 1:12; 3:15, 16, 18 (twice); 3:36; 5:24; 6:35, 40, 47, 64; 7:38; 11:25, 26; 12:44, 46; 20:31; Acts 10:43; 13:39; Rom 1:16; 3:22; 4:5, 11, 24; 9:33; 10:4, 11; 1 Cor 1:21; 14:22; Gal 3:22; Eph 1:19; 1 Thess 1:7; 2:10, 13; 1 Pet 1:8; 2:6, 7; 1 John 5:1, 5, 10 (twice), 13.

<sup>87</sup> Second Edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993, 2003.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 246. So Ernest De Witt Burton, “The Present Participle most frequently denotes an action in progress, simultaneous with the action of the principal verb” (*Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1900], 54).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 620-21, brackets are mine.

soteriological contexts (cf. John 1:12; 3:15, 16, 18; 3:36; 6:35, 47, 64; 7:38; 11:25; 12:46; Acts 2:44; 10:43; 13:39; Rom 1:16; 3:22; 4:11, 24; 9:33; 10:4, 11; 1 Cor 1:21; 1 Cor 14:22 [*bis*]; Gal 3:22; Eph 1:19; 1 Thess 1:7; 2:10, 13; 1 Pet 2:6, 7; 1 John 5:1, 5, 10, 13).<sup>90</sup> Thus, it seems that since the aorist participle was a live option to describe a “believer,” it is unlikely that when the present was used, it was aspectually flat. The present was the tense of choice most likely because the NT writers by and large saw *continual* belief as a necessary condition of salvation. Along these lines, it seems significant that the *promise* of salvation is almost always given to [“the believing”] (cf. several of the above cited texts), almost never to [“the having believed”] (apart from Mark 16:16, John 7:39 and Heb 4:3 come the closest . . .).<sup>91</sup>

Wallace’s comments about the Greek present tense verb *pisteuō* (“believing”) in salvation contexts is consistent with what has been discovered already from the Scriptures. A person’s present possession of eternal life/salvation is *conditional* upon an ongoing trust in the source of life/salvation, Jesus Christ.<sup>92</sup> While it is acknowledged by

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<sup>90</sup> Please note that my above scriptural reference list is slightly different than Wallace’s.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 621, brackets are mine.

<sup>92</sup> Daniel Steele (1824-1914), a Methodist pastor and professor of NT Greek at Boston University, arrived at parallel conclusions in his 1878 book, *Mile-stone Papers: Doctrinal, Ethical, and Experimental on Christian Progress* [New York: Nelson and Phillips; Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden]. In a chapter titled: “Tense Readings of the Greek New Testament,” he wrote:

The next fact which impresses us in our investigation is the . . . *presence of the present tense whenever the conditions of final salvation are stated*. Our inference is that the conditions of ultimate salvation are continuous, extending through probation, and not completed in any one act. The great requirement is faith in Jesus Christ. A careful study of the Greek will convince the student that it is a great mistake to teach that a single act of faith furnishes a person with a paid-up, non-forfeitable policy, assuring the holder that he will inherit eternal life, or that a single energy of faith secures a through ticket for heaven . . . . The Greek tenses show that faith is a state, a habit of mind, into which the believer enters at justification. . . .

John 1:12: But as many as received (aor.) Him . . . to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that are believing (present) perseveringly on His name. . . .

John 3:15: That whosoever is continuously believing in Him should not perish . . . but be having everlasting life. Here, again, the present . . . participle of the verb to believe is used, as it is again in verses 16 and 36.

John 5:24: Verily, verily I say unto you, he that is always hearing My word, and constantly believing on Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and is not coming into condemnation, but as passed over (perfect) from death unto life, and so continues. Says Alford: “So in 1 John 5:12, 13, the believing and the having eternal life are *commensurate*; where the faith is, the possession of eternal life is, and when the one remits, the other is forfeited. But here the faith is set before us as an *enduring* faith, and its effects described *in their completion*. (See Eph. 1:19, 20).” Thus this great English scholar rescues this text from its perverted use, to teach an eternal incorporation

Greek grammarians that “continuous action” does not monopolize the “present tense,” A. T. Robertson says, “it more frequently denotes linear [i.e. continuous] action. The verb and the context must decide.”<sup>93</sup>

Charles Stanley and other Moderate Calvinists have the burden of proof to demonstrate that the Greek present tense verb for “believing,” in salvation contexts, does not convey *continuous action*, but some other kind of action. It was demonstrated that in salvation contexts such as John 3:18, 36, where “the believing” was contrasted with “the unbelieving/disobeying,” the most natural interpretation was to see both sets of verbs as describing *continuous or ongoing actions*. Furthermore, the Scriptures state that eternal life is possessed only “in Christ.” A person possesses eternal life the moment they believe in Christ, and as long as they continue to trust in him they remain “in him”—in a life-giving union and saving relationship with him (John 6:56).

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into Christ by a single act of faith, and he demonstrates the common-sense doctrine that the perseverance of the saints is grounded on persistent trust in Jesus Christ. . . .

John 6:29: . . . This is the work of God, that ye perseveringly believe [on Him whom He sent].

John 6:35: He that is perpetually coming (pres.) to Me shall not, by any means (double negative), once hunger (aor.) and he that is constantly believing in Me (emphatic) shall never, by any means, (double negative), feel one pang of thirst (aor.). . . .

John 6:54: Whoso eateth (pres., keeps eating) My flesh, and drinketh (keeps drinking) My blood, hath eternal life.

John 11:25, 26: he that believeth persistently (pres.) shall not, by any mean (double negative), die (aor.) forever.

John 20:31: That ye might believe . . . that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing constantly (pres.), ye might have life through His name. . . .

In Rom. 1:16, where future and eternal salvation is spoken of, it is promised to every one that perseveringly believes (pres.). So also in Rom. 3:22; 4:24; 9:33; 10:4, 11; 1 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:7; 2:10, 13; 4:14. . . .

Hence we conclude from a thorough examination of the above texts, that the Spirit of inspiration has uniformly chosen the present tense in order to teach that final salvation depends on persevering faith. (47-52)

<sup>93</sup> *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934], 587. In the Introduction to the *The NKJV Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* it says, “The present tense often, but by no means always, has a linear, that is a continuous idea” (xvi).

Stanley asserted that the Greek present tense does not normally convey continuous action, but failed to provide any support for his belief from Greek reference works. The evidence brought forth from Greek-English Interlinears, Literal Translations, and Greek Grammarians has shown Stanley's understanding of the Greek present tense, as it relates to believing and having eternal life, to be inadequate and dangerously misleading. From a pastoral perspective, it is disheartening to read Stanley telling other Christians that they can stop trusting in Christ, become unbelievers, and still be in possession of eternal life from Christ. Would it not be more pastorally responsible to tell other Christians that once they place their faith in Christ that God "irresistibly" insures that they will continue to do so till the end of their life? While I do not believe that this position can be supported from Scripture, it at least maintains that one's saving relationship with Christ rests upon a living faith in a living Savior.

### **So Who is Right?**

At the beginning of this article Robert Shank asked, "Who is right?" as to whether saving faith is the act of a moment or the attitude of a life. My biblical investigation led to the same conclusions that Shank reached almost 50 years ago—saving faith is the attitude of a life and "the initial decision must be perpetually implemented throughout the life of the believer." Reformed Calvinists and Arminians agree that saving faith is a living and persevering faith, while Moderate Calvinists hold to a view of saving faith that is not in keeping with the Scriptures we examined. More evidence could be presented from scholars and commentators to confirm my conclusions, but its best to direct the

reader to see the footnote below for this supplemental material.<sup>94</sup>

I do not presume to have once and for all settled the issue of saving faith in this article. There are more Scriptures to consider and questions to answer. Nevertheless, it seems that we would be wise to follow Wesley's admonishment to fellow believers—"Continue to believe in him that loved thee, and gave himself for thee; that bore all thy sins in his own body on the tree; and he saveth thee from all condemnation, by his blood continually applied."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> At the Society of Evangelical Arminians ([www.evangelicalarminians.com](http://www.evangelicalarminians.com)) I have posted a PDF article called "Saving Faith is an Attitude of a Life—*The Scholarly Evidence*." It contains the quotes found in this article and additional quotes from scholars and commentators that will add further weight to my conclusions. See also at SEA the article "Saving Faith in the Greek New Testament," where I quote from Greek-English Interlinear and Literal Translations of the New Testament which reveal that the ones "believing" or "trusting" in Christ are the ones enjoying a saving relationship with Christ.

<sup>95</sup> This paper was completed in December 2009, by Steve Witzki.