

26 *John 3:16: Obeying Unto Christ Should Save?*

Introduction

When the English translations of the Greek New Testament were made in the 1526-1611 period, the “difficult Greek in which the New Testament is written...still held mysteries for” English scholars. (Nicolson: 224.) One of those mysteries was the Greek word *pisteuo* in John 3:16. In over 200 instances of *pisteuo* in the New Testament, not once did the King James Bible render it as *obey*. (See *Strong’s Concordance*.) However, scholars now realize *obey* was a common meaning of *pisteuo* in ancient Greek. *Obey* certainly was the meaning of *pisteuo* in John 3:36 (see page 448). Yet, this *obedience* salvation formula is identically repeated in John 3:16.

Besides John 3:36 helping, one can more easily accept *pisteuo* means *obeys* in John 3:16 when one looks at Apostle John’s many quotes of Jesus about obedience. Jesus in John 8:51 says “whoever keeps on **obeying** (*tereo*) My Teaching should never ever die.”¹ In John 15:1-10, Jesus says a “branch **in me**” that does not “bear fruit” is “taken away,” “cut off from the vine,” thrown “outside and burned.”²

John likewise quoted Jesus saying in total accord:

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; **they that have done good [things], unto the resurrection of life**; and **they that have done evil [things], unto the resurrection of damnation**. (John 5:28-29 KJV).³

1. See “John 8:51: Obedience Should Save” on page 367 *et seq.*

2. See “Metaphor Of The Vine” on page 343 *et seq.*

We saw again that Apostle John was told that those who obey the commandments (plural) have *the right* to the tree of life. (Rev. 22:14.) John writes:

Happy [are] the ones *doing His commandments*, so that their *right* will be *to the tree of life*, and they *shall enter* by the gates into the city. (Rev 22:14)(ALT)⁴

We also saw Apostle John writing Jesus' words to the Sardisian Christians. They are dead due to having "incomplete works." They can prevent the Spirit leaving by repenting and obeying. Through John's pen, Jesus tells them:

And to the angel of the assembly in Sardis write: "These [things] says the One having the seven spirits of God and the seven stars [i.e., Jesus is speaking]: I know your *works*, that you have a name that you live, and you are *dead*. (2) 'Become watching [fig., Wake up], and strengthen the rest which you were about to be throwing out, for I have not found *your works* having been *completed* before My God. (3) Therefore, be remembering how you have received, and be keeping [*tereo, obey*] it, and repent. Therefore, if you will not watch, I will come upon you like a thief, and you shall by no means know what hour I will come upon you." (Rev 3:1-3 ALT.)⁵

John another time relays Jesus as saying that lukewarm works by Christians at Laodicea will cause Jesus to spew them out of His mouth.

I know thy *works*, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. (16) So

3. See "Those Who Have Done Good Things Are Resurrected" on page 395.

4. See "Right To The Tree Of Life" on page 373 *et seq.*

5. See "Incomplete & Lukewarm Works" on page 401 *et seq.*

then because ***thou art lukewarm***, and neither cold nor hot, I will ***spue thee out of my mouth***. (Rev 3:15-16 KJV.)

Finally, we saw among the many verses that tied *eternal life* (*zoe aion*) to obedience and works was the following words of Jesus recorded by Apostle John:

He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto ***life eternal***. (26) If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will the Father honor. (John 12:25-26 ASV.)

These passages from the writings of John quoting Jesus are but echoes of what we find in Matthew, Luke and Mark. John is repeatedly emphasizing themes of obedience.

Hence, besides John 3:36, these passages from John make the proposed translation of John 3:16 as about *obedience* appear far more sensible than translation tradition would suggest. This change, incidentally, will unite what scholars call the Synoptic-Jesus with the Johannine Jesus. It turns out there are no separate portrayals of Jesus in the mind of Matthew-Mark-Luke versus the mind of John. Rather, the translators have improperly given Jesus ***two doctrines*** and ***two personalities*** by erroneously translating John 3:16 in a manner which suits cheap grace doctrine to leave uncorrected.

However, we shall see that the leading evangelical scholars who dared write on this question begrudgingly admit *pisteuo* means *obey* in John 3:16. It is only the translators who, for some inexplicable reason, continue to hesitate to make this now compellingly-obvious correction.

Three Interpretive Issues

John 3:16 is the most commonly cited passage from Jesus to prove one is saved by faith alone. This faith is usually described as *believing* that Jesus is Lord and Savior. Or

sometimes it is said that you must simply *believe* that Jesus died for your sins. (Stanley, Spurgeon.) Sometimes it is said you must also *believe* that Jesus resurrected.

Whatever is the *belief* one must hold to be saved, typically it is also claimed John 3:16 conveys the idea of a *one-time* belief. In fact, Charles Stanley in *Eternal Security* (1995) at 95 says the verb *believes* in the standard translation implies a one-time belief (that Christ died for your sins, *id.*, at 33-34). Hence, such a one-time belief is supposedly all that you need to be saved. Therefore, it is allegedly irrelevant whether one repents from sin or not. Stanley says it is a good idea to change, but it only improves your fellowship with God. The Lord will supposedly save the disobedient believer anyway based on faith alone.

In fact, Stanley says your salvation is such a foregone conclusion once you sincerely believe Christ died for your sins that even if you for all practical purposes were later an unbeliever in thought and deed, your salvation is never in jeopardy: “Even if *a believer* for all practical purposes *becomes an unbeliever*, his salvation is not in jeopardy.” (Stanley, *Eternal Security, supra*, at 93.) Salvation is supposedly by faith alone, from start to finish.

However, there are three defects in the popular *English* translation of the original Greek which in turn feed these interpretations of the verse. (These defects also appear in the German *Luther Bible* of 1522.) The correction of these defects turn on answering these three questions:

- Does the verb *pisteuo* translated in English as *believes* in the KJV mean *believe* or instead *obey, comply, trust, etc.*?
- Is it *pisteuo* “in” Jesus or “for (unto)” Jesus” in the original Greek?
- Is the verb form taken for *pisteousin* translated in the KJV as *believes* (the English simple present tense) instead in Greek a continuous tense meaning? In other words, is the meaning *keeps on* or *continues to* in front of whatever the verb means for *pisteuo, i.e., keeps on obeying, etc., or keeps on believing?*

Two of these three issues are readily apparent if you compare common translations of John 3:16, in particular the **bolded** portions below, on the left with those on the right.

TABLE 1. John 3:16: Importance Of Translation

KJV-NIV	Alternative Translations
For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son... (KJV)	For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, unique] Son (ALT)... [Essentially the same.]
that whosoever believeth in him (KJV) <i>cf.</i> NIV (believes in him)	so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him (ALT)
<i>should</i> not perish (KJV)	<i>should</i> not perish (ALT)[same]
shall have eternal life (NIV)	may have life age-enduring (YLT); should have eternal life. (Reina Valera, <i>mas tenga vida eterna</i> ; Vulgate, <i>habeat vida eternum</i>).

Does It Matter If John 3:16 Is About *Obedience* Not *Belief*?

There is a huge difference theologically between *obey*, *comply*, *trust* on one side and *belief* on the other.

Jesus discussed once this distinction. Jesus said it is incongruous to *think* you can say you believe in Him as Lord but feel free to *disobey* Him. Jesus said: “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I tell you?” (Luke 6:46.) Jesus therefore declares it is unfathomable that one thinks it is enough to believe in Him but not obey Him.

Another proof of a large chasm of difference between mere belief and obedience comes from the gospel accounts about demons.

Demons believe Jesus is Lord and Savior. (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34. See also, James 2:19.) The demons, however, do not obey Jesus as Lord. They do not act in compliance with their acknowledgment of the fact of who Jesus is. They do not trust Him. They do not obey Him.

Pastor Stedman, an evangelical scholar who believes in ‘faith alone,’ unwittingly admits this distinction:

Remember that back in the Gospel accounts there were demons that **acknowledged the deity of the Lord Jesus**? When he appeared before them they said, ‘We know who you are, the Holy One of God.’ (cf, Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34.) They **acknowledged** what the Jews were too blind to see, the full deity of Jesus Christ, as well as his humanity. But, though demons **acknowledged this, they never confessed it**. They **never trusted** him. They did **not commit themselves** to him, they did not *live* by this truth.⁶

Yet, we are told that John 3:16 proves that if you *believe* Jesus is Lord, Messiah, died for your sins, etc., then you shall have eternal life. If this were true, then the demons should be saved because they believe and know these things are true. (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34.) James made a similar point in James 2:19. He says the demons believe the facts about God, but they are not saved thereby.

Hence, when we consider Jesus’ dismay that people think they can call Him Lord but that obedience is optional, we are justified questioning John 3:16 in standard translation because it licenses that doctrine for so many.

Reliable Dictionary Meanings Of Pisteuo In John 3:16 As Obey

The most exhaustive dictionary of ancient Greek is Liddell-Scott’s Lexicon. It is by far the most reliable.

There are six meanings offered in Liddell-Scott’s Lexicon of the Greek verb *pisteuo* at issue in John 3:16.⁷

One meaning in Liddell-Scott for the verb *pisteuo* is *comply*. A synonym is *obey*. (See Footnote 7, page 423.)

The *NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Zondervan: 2000) has this likewise to say of *pisteuo*:

6. Ray C. Stedman, *When Unbelief is Right* (1967), reprinted at <http://www.pbc.org/dp/stedman/1john/0161.html> (last visited 2005).

Similarly, *pisteuo* means to trust something or someone; it can refer to and confirm legendary tales and mythical ideas. **With reference to people, pisteuo means to obey**; the pass[ive] Means to enjoy trust...

This is likewise mentioned in the highly authoritative *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT) 6 (1968): 4-7, in an entry by Bultmann (1884-1976) — the eminent Lutheran scholar — in which he says the verb “pisteuo means” (among other things) “to trust” and “also ‘to **obey**.’” (It is both enlightening and disturbing to watch how ‘cheap grace adherents cope with this dictionary entry despite the TDNT being one of the most authoritative and scholarly dictionary references within *Protestantism*.)⁸

What If It Only Looks Like A Dictionary? It Still Is Not One

Yet, do not be surprised when you go to the evangelical bookstore, and you open up a Greek word study on *pisteuo*, and you find “obey” and “comply” are not even identified as *possible* meanings. For example, in Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study — New Testament* (Chatanooga, TN: AMG, 1993) at 1160-62 — on my local Christian bookstore shelf in 2007 — you will see what appears to be a comprehensive entry on *pisteuo*. Yet, not once

7. Liddel Scott defines *pisteuo* as:

- “1. *trust*, put faith in, rely on a person, thing, or statement,
 2. Pass[ive], to be *trusted* or believed
 3. *comply*.
 4. c. infinitive., *believe that*, feel confident that a thing is, will be, has been
 5. c. dat. and inf., toisi episteue sigan to whom he *trusted* that they would keep silence
 6. have faith II. (1) p. tini ti *entrust* something to another (2) Pass., pisteuethai ti to be *entrusted with a thing*, have it committed to one.”
- This is available online or in a library in the Liddell & Scott *Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: 1869) at 1273.

does it mention “obey” or “comply” as a definition. It is obvious what is happening. Zodhiates never calls his word study a dictionary, and thus you cannot accuse him of misleading anyone. He called it a word study, not a *dictionary*. Unfortunately, the average Christian does not know the fine distinction.

The same problem holds true of the *Strong’s Concordance*. Its title — a concordance — means it is only a reference to how the King James Bible translated every Greek word listed. It does not purport to be a dictionary. However, most Christians think because it is laid out as a dictionary, that in fact it is a dictionary. However, *Strong’s* is not a dictionary, and never purports to be one. Yet, if you rely upon its ‘entries’ under *pisteuo*, you never once see the meaning *obey* or *comply*. Don’t be fooled. If it does not say it is a *dictionary*, it is not purporting to be one.

How Negative Prefixes Aid Translation

One can further confirm *pisteuo*’s meaning by adding a negative prefix in front of *pisteuo* — the letter *a*, and then see what are the word meanings of the Greek word formed thereby — *apisteo*. Liddell-Scott points out that *apisteo* means, among other things, “to **disobey**...refuse to **comply**.” (Liddell-Scott, *Greek Lexicon*.)

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8. Bing is critical of translating *pisteuo* as *obey*. Rather than deal properly with the issue, he barely mentions the authoritative sources that directly define *pisteuo* as sometimes meaning *obey*. When he discusses Bultmann’s entry in the TDNT, Bing claims *obey* is merely a “suggestion.” Bing then says Bultmann’s theology is driving this “suggestion” rather than Greek. Bing then makes it sound like Bultmann is relying on weak lexical aids. What Bing never does is explore what Greek dictionaries (not concordances or word studies) include among the definitions of *pisteuo*. On that score, Bultmann would have been a poor scholar had he omitted *obey* as one definition. See Charles C. Bing, *Lordship Salvation — A Biblical Evaluation and Response* (Ph.D. Dissertation) (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1991), reprinted at <http://www.forerunner.org/bing/LS-chap2.htm> (accessed 7-21-07).

Apisteo is clearly used in this way in 1 Peter 2:7. See KJV-Geneva “disobey.” See also 2 Tim 2:13 (“if we are *apisteo* disobeying” is antithesis to God’s *pistos* or *faithfulness*). In the Septuagint of 247 B.C., *apisteo* “several times answers to the Hebrew [word for] *rebellious*.” (Parkhurst, 1829:71.)

Of course, *apisteo* can still mean *disbelieve*, just as *pisteuo* can still mean *believe* in a fact or truth. Nevertheless, the point is that to a Greek the idea of a *belief* alone is not necessarily the correct meaning. A competing and valid meaning of *pisteuo* is *obey* or *comply*. This is demonstrable not only from the dictionary meaning of *pisteuo*, but also from the definition of its opposite — *apisteo*.

Thayer and Parkhurst On *Obedience* Meaning Of *Pisteuo*

This *obedience*-meaning for *pisteuo* is also reflected by other evangelical lexicographers. These reputable Christian scholars are evidently trying to gently disabuse Christians from the idea of *belief* alone as the *primary* meaning of these words in the New Testament. For example, J.H. Thayer is the most highly honored lexicographer of New Testament Greek. Nevertheless, Thayer noted *pistis* — the noun formed from *pisteuo* — is “used *especially* of the faith by which a man embraces Jesus, *i.e.*, *a conviction*, full of joyful *trust....conjoined* with *obedience* to Christ.” (Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon* (T. & T. Clark: 1958) at 511.) Likewise, Parkhurst, who enjoys similar repute, said in 1829 of *pisteuo* in John 3:16 that it simultaneously means a “cordial reception [belief] ... and *obedience*.....” (Parkhurst: 683-84.)

‘Obey’ Fits Other Passages

If *pisteuo* means *obey* here, then John 3:16 would be merely repeating Hebrews 5:9 which explicitly says: “He became the author of eternal salvation unto all of them that are *obeying* Him.” (*Obey* is *hoopakouo* in continuous tense.)⁹

Likewise, if *pisteuo* means *obey* in John 3:16, it would fit John 8:51 which says: “anyone who keeps on *obey-ing* (*tereo*, ‘diligently following’ in a continuous tense) my teaching should never ever die.”

It would also perfectly match Peter’s declaration to the High Priest in Acts 5:32: “And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that [keep on] *obey[ing]* (*peitharcho*, continuous tense) him.” (Act 5:32 ASV.) *Peitharcho* means literally *submission to a judge*, and its typical usage means *obey*. Here, Peter says God’s Holy Spirit is given to those who “keep on obeying [Jesus].”

Thus, translating *pisteuo* in John 3:16 as *obey* or *comply*, if truly the intention of Jesus, would match other Greek synonyms which are used to mean *obey* and which likewise appear in salvation-formula statements. These equivalent statements which conditioned salvation on obedience use distinct but yet synonymous verbs for *obedience*: *tereo* — diligently follow or obey; *petharcho* — submit to a judge or obey; and *hoopakouo* — listen attentively to or obey. (John 8:51; Acts 5:32; Heb. 5:9.)

Hence, the translation of *pisteuo* in John 3:16 as *obey* has serious possibilities. It is a true dictionary meaning. It is not merely a suggestion or contrived idea. Moreover, if intended in John 3:16, we see it fits well into other verses which explicitly emphasize obedience for salvation-sake as used by Jesus, the Apostle Peter and the writer of Hebrews.

‘Trust’ Meanings Of Pisteuo

There are still other translation options of *pisteuo* to consider. In Liddell-Scott, four of the other six meanings of the verb *pisteuo* center on *trust or entrust*. See Footnote 7, page 423.

9. It literally means *to listen attentively*.

These words *trust* or *entrust* are not to be confused with “trust in some fact.” Some like Stanley accept *pisteuo* really means *trust*, but then immediately try to dilute the meaning of *trust* so it is indistinguishable from *belief alone*. Instead, *trust* implies *follow* and/or *obey*, and is distinguishable from *believe in a fact*. Based on accepting *trust* as the meaning here, Stanley dilutes it to a trust that Jesus’ atonement is sufficient without any works of obedience ever necessary on our part. (Stanley, *Eternal Security, supra*, at 33-34.)

Instead, the meaning of *pisteuo* as *trust* is not so shallow. Another eminent Protestant scholar of the Greek, W. E. Vine in his *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984) explains when *pisteuo* means *trust*, then *pisteuo* means “not mere credence” (belief alone) but instead, “reliance upon.” He means a reliance like you would rely upon your doctor’s orders. You would follow or obey your doctor’s guidance.¹⁰

Thus, to *trust Jesus*, if the correct translation, would mean to *trust Him* as the doctor of your soul. If your doctor pays you a visit, gives you a sermon on how you need to live differently, *e.g.*, be a peacemaker, not lust adulterously, not make false vows, etc., in order to have a “righteousness” greater than all the teachers you had before and “enter heaven” (Matt. 5:20, 23:23), you mean by such *trust* to say you are going to trust the doctor’s prescriptions. You will **obey** the doctor’s orders.

“Belief In Facts” Meaning Of Pisteuo

Nevertheless, in one usage identified in Liddell-Scott, *pisteuo* can be translated as someone *believes* that something is true. Or it can mean to be confident in a fact. (See Footnote 7, page 423.)

10. An online reprint is at <http://www.bibletexts.com/glossary/belief.htm> (accessed 7-5-07).

This *belief-in-a-fact* usage out of six possible meanings leaves open the door — ever so slightly — that the speaker (Jesus) in John 3:16 could mean potentially *belief* in some fact or truth. This *belief*-usage does not imply, by itself, obedience or compliance is what should lead to eternal life. Thus, the *belief alone* option has to be on the table at the outset.

How Was Pisteuo Used In The Immediate Context?

One of the most famous evangelical scholars — Vincent — was one of the first to note the significance of *eis* following *pisteuo* in John 3:16. He said its effect in the sentence required reading *pisteuo* not to mean mere belief in facts. It required the meaning of *obedience*. Vincent says:

“believe **on**’ (*pisteuosin eis*) is **more than mere acceptance of a statement**. It is so to accept them practically....Hence, to believe **on** the Lord Jesus is not merely to believe the facts of His historic life or His saving energy as facts, but to accept Him as Savior, Teacher, Sympathizer, Judge; to rest the soul upon Him for present and future salvation; and **to accept and adopt His precepts and example and binding upon the life**.” (Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (C. Scribner’s: 1905) Vol. 2 at 49-50.)

Background on Vincent's Claim

What Vincent is saying is that it is often overlooked in John 3:16 that *pisteuo* is followed by the words “*eis autos*”¹¹ — *eis* meaning “**unto**, into, towards, **for**.” (Thayer's *New Testament Lexicon*.) *Autos* simply means *him*. The word *pisteuo* is not followed by the Greek word for *in* which is *en*.

Meaning of Eis

Liddell-Scott's Lexicon provides us once more the most authoritative analysis of the meaning of the word *eis*. In its standard usage, *eis* means “into” or “more loosely, to.”¹² Liddell-Scott, however, will explain carefully its usages where it changes to the meaning of **for**. (An English synonym of *for* is *unto* with non-motion verbs. The word *unto* is listed by Thayer above as an optional translation of *eis*, which will be important later.)

However, before discussing Liddell-Scott's detailed examples of the nuanced meanings of *eis*, up front we need to note the word *eis* is never offered to be translated as the English word *in* by either Thayer's or Liddell-Scott.

Yet, the King James felt free to render *eis* with our English word *in* on **138 occasions**, including John 3:16. Yet, **the English word *in* is impermissible**. There is a Greek word for *in*, and not surprisingly it is the word *en*.

With that caution in mind, let's study *eis* in Liddell-Scott — the most thorough and reliable Greek lexicon ever assembled.

Liddell-Scott starts out by distinguishing the possible meaning of *eis* if a verb expresses motion or not.

11. Westcott-Hort, Nestle-Asland 26 (http://www.thenazareneway.com/greek_new_test/john.htm); Stephen's Textus Receptus 1550; Scrivner 1894; Byzantine Majority (<http://www.awmach.org/web/BGR/joh.htm#3:1>) (accessed 7-4-07).

12. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3D%2331236> (last accessed 7-4-07).

Liddell-Scott says *eis* with verbs of motion or direction means “into.” Thus, one would say you go ‘into’ (*eis*) a place. This is the typical usage of *eis* — it follows a verb of motion.¹³

***Eis* With Verbs Lacking Sense Of Motion Or Direction**

On the other hand, if the verb “has no sense of motion to or into a place,” Liddell-Scott says then the translation should be “for.”

In such a case, *eis* is rendered as *for* because the sentence intends to express *purpose* or *object*. *Eis* as a preposition likewise, when standing alone, often has this function. Liddell-Scott explains:

of Purpose or Object...**for** good, **for** his good...to live **for** show...to be pertinent, to the purpose...to cause fear [*eis phobon*]

(Incidentally, this *for* meaning is distinguishable from the Greek word *gar* which means *for* in the sense of *because*. “*Repent, for (Greek, gar) the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” Matt. 3:2.)

We find this *for* meaning of *eis* in many places in the New Testament writings.

The *eis* of purpose, meaning *for*, is how Paul spoke in Ephesians 4:11, 12. Paul said: “And he gave some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers toward (Greek, *pros*) the equipping of the saints **for** (Greek, *eis*) the work of ministry **for** (Greek, *eis*) the building of the body of Christ.”

The same usage of *eis* as *for* (an *object*) is found in 1 Peter 3:21. Apostle Peter says “baptism... does now *save us* — not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience *eis* — **FOR** — God.” Peter means when during the washing of baptism you answer and truly repent

13. Another use of *eis* is to express relations such as “in regard to.”

FOR God's sake (*i.e.*, the answer of a good conscience), this aspect of baptism is what "saves us" (not the washing of the water).

Apostle Peter uses *eis* the same way again when Peter says in Acts 2:38 the following:

And Peter said unto them, **Repent** ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **FOR** (Greek, *eis*) the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (KJV).

Peter intends us to understand that the water has no magic for salvation sake (1 Peter 3:21), but that a good conscience by repentance from sin is **FOR** the remission of sins.

Hence, we see numerous uses of *eis* in Scripture to mean *for* a purpose or object, including *for* God. We saw examples where it is spoken of as having a *good conscience* FOR GOD or as having *repentance* FOR the remissions of sins. (Incidentally, please do not overlook Peter's salvation statements just quoted at odds with cheap grace.)

***Eis* Can Crucially Change Meaning**

Kenneth Wuest (1893-1962), formerly a professor at Moody Bible Institute, makes the point that translating *eis* into English **incorrectly** has misled the reader in other contexts. His remark below is just as applicable to what happened to John 3:16 due to the English mistranslation of *eis* as *in*, as we shall see below:

A careful study of the Greek preposition [*eis*] discloses **some precious truth** that would otherwise be **obscured** by reason of **a wrong interpretation put upon an English preposition**, and at the same time **saves the expositor** from arriving at **a wrong interpretation**.¹⁴

14. Kenneth Wuest, *Practical Use of the Greek New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.) at 61 and 62.

With all of that in mind, let's examine the possibilities of how to translate John 3:16.

Is *Pisteuo* A Verb Of Motion?

Considering what Liddell-Scott explained, the correct meaning of *eis* here should be *for* (or its English synonym *unto*) with the sense of purpose or object. The verb *pisteuo*, whether *obey*, *comply*, *trust*, *etc.*, or *believe* (some fact) is **not a verb of motion**.

Some suggest *pisteuo* has a sense of motion by paraphrasing it to mean '*place* one's faith in or on Jesus.' Yet, that is adding words to make *pisteuo* appear a verb of motion. However, if *pisteuo* is being used to mean *believe*, it not only lacks any motion, it lacks any sense of motion, as even the proponents of that meaning intend. If *pisteuo* means instead *comply*, *obey*, *commit*, or *trust*, it likewise signifies *no motion* — *no physical placing*. No one is *going* anywhere, and hence it is not a verb of motion. Thus, one can see the suggestion that it means the motion of *placing* something *in* someone else is a motion activity not present in the verb meaning itself. What drives this?

Some Christian scholars suggest that we must either “*supply a missing idea of motion*” or “recognize a negligent use of *eis*” in certain contexts.¹⁵ If the meaning is metaphysical, “it is left to the interpreter to decide which meaning is best suited to the context in every particular case.” (Butmann, *id.*) While never saying so, such a lesson can only be addressed to the problem presented by *eis* in John 3:16. If you want the meaning of *eis* in John 3:16 to come out as *in* due to a preconceived notion about salvation, you simply must supply the “missing meaning” to the verb involved (*i.e.*, ‘*placing*’), so *pisteuo* now appears a verb of motion. Then you can rationalize *eis* to mean *into*. Then it is a short leap —

15. Alexander Buttman, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* (Andover: Walter Draper, 1873) at 333 (available from Google books).

although itself unjustifiable — to truncate this down to *in*. With that *in* placed where it does not belong, you can then peg *pisteuo* to mean *believes*.

However, may I suggest this idea that translators are free to supply a “missing meaning” or suppose “negligent use of *eis*” is doctrine speaking. It is no longer objective analysis. Objective scholars would readily see Butmann’s reasoning is used to help justify the translation of *eis* as *in* rather than as *for*. In other words, some describe the verb in such a manner of ‘putting faith in someone’ *solely* to justify the habitual English rendering of *in* within John 3:16. This is how they force *eis* to mean *in* — by conforming the verb meaning to justify their preferred understanding of *eis*. Yet, it is the nature of the verb that controls the meaning of *eis*. It is not the preferred rendering of *eis* which drives us to change and mold the verb. These translators have it backwards.

Let’s turn to objective scholars for help. Malcolm D. Hyman of Harvard provides useful analysis in *Greek and Roman Grammarians On Motion Verbs and Place Adverbials* (January 4, 2003) (available online).¹⁶ His study provides us an objective source of information. He says a motion verb means an intransitive verb which “denotes **a change of place**.” You will find it often in conjunction with “a spatial adverbial — a prepositional phrase or adverb.” Hyman points out that ancient Greek grammarians spelled out these rules with precision. Such a grammarian was Apollonius Dyscolus. Apollonius explained adverbs’ meanings change in relation to whether a motion or non-motion verb is used. Thus, *ano* means *above*, but after a motion verb it means *upwards*. Apollonius described this phenomenon in Greek where “semantic categories are represented by the same linguistic form.” In other words, the preposition’s meaning changes by the nature of the verb involved. Latin has the identical grammar.

16.<http://archimedes.fas.harvard.edu/mdh/motion.pdf> (accessed 7-18-07).

What are verbs of motion? Hyman explains that if the verb signifies one is *going* somewhere, it is a verb of motion, and adverbials (including prepositions) take on a different meaning. For example, “I start,” “I proceed,” or “I make my way” are motion verbs. When used with motion, Hyman mentions *eis* means *into*.

When the verb is not of motion, such as here — where it is *obey*, *commit*, *trust* or *believes*, Liddell-Scott says the sense of *eis* is *for*. Also, one can see the verb followed by *eis* and a pronoun *him* (indicating Jesus) is identifying an object or purpose in view. It is comparable to the example Liddell-Scott gave of *for (eis) his good*. The verb activity is thus for the sake of Jesus. It is *for Him*.

Vincent in volume two of his work agrees on the impact of *eis* in the sentence. In fact, Vincent says *eis* drives the meaning so that *pisteuo* means *obey*, not merely *believes* when Jesus speaks in John 3:16. Vincent says the *eis* requires *pisteuo* to mean “to accept and adopt His precepts and example as binding upon” one’s life — the true predicate to *eternal life* in John 3:16.¹⁷ *Pisteuo* is thus *unto Him — for His benefit, for His service*. It means *obedience* results in eternal life.

Unto’s Meaning In English

In rendering John 3:16, we will prefer rendering *eis* as *unto* rather than *for*. It simply sounds better. In English, *unto* is a word that when change in “place is not the sense” (*i.e.*, a motion is not involved in the verb), *unto* means “in order to or with the purpose that.”¹⁸ In short, it means *for* in the sense

17. As quoted previously above, Vincent in his Prologue of volume two emphasizes that *eis* in expression of *pisteuosin eis* means *obeying* Jesus. See quote at 428 *supra* from Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (C. Scribner’s: 1905) Vol. 2 at 49-50.

18. Edward Byrd, “Unto what then were ye Baptized?,” *The Reminder* Volume No. 23 Issue No. 07 (November 1983), available online at <http://www.anabaptist.com/ReminderTemplate.cfm?ReminderID=3> (accessed 7-21-07).

of purpose. Thus, if the verb involved is not a verb of motion from place to place, *unto* is a perfect synonym for the English word *for*. Sometimes it just sounds better to use *unto* in place of *for*. See for example Romans 1:16 RSV (“power of God unto (*eis*) salvation...”); Romans 6:10 (“Christ died unto (*eis*) sin once....”)

Having Solved Eis' Meaning, What Is The Best Meaning Of The Expression?

Now let's put Vincent's claim in volume two of his famous work that *pisteuosin eis* in John 3:16 means to *obey* Jesus. We will take the previously established meanings of *pisteuo*, and then combine each with *unto* as the best English synonym for *eis*. The result should allow us to test which of the following statements reads best. (The verb tense is continuous which is reflected below by adding 'keeps on.')

- “whosoever keeps on trusting *unto* him....”
- “whoever keeps on obeying/complying *unto* him....”
- “whoever keeps on believing (that a thing is, will be or has been true) *unto* him.”
- “whoever keeps on committing *unto* him.”

The interesting thing here is no matter what meaning you give *pisteuo* among these, when you remove *in* and replace it with the sense of *for* (*i.e.*, ‘unto’), the emphasis of the sentence changes. The verb activity now has a purpose that validates it. This is what the word *eis* does to the sentence. As Vincent said, ***this little preposition is the key that unlocks the verse.***

Unfortunately, the preposition *in* which the KJV used only obscures this purpose.

19. See “Issue #3: Continuity Or One Time Pisteousin?” on page 510 *et seq.*

As Professor Wuest said as to other passages, the wrong English translation of the Greek preposition *eis* can cause “**some precious truth**” to be “**obscured** by reason of **a wrong interpretation put upon an [erroneous] English preposition**” used to translate *eis*. The repair of such an error “**saves the expositor** from arriving at **a wrong interpretation.**” See page 431 *supra*.

Thus, in John 3:16 *eis* makes clear that whatever the activity it is that *pisteuo* represents, it is *for* Jesus’ sake. It is not a verb activity you have *in* Jesus. It is something you are *doing* FOR Jesus — “unto” our Lord. That’s the point of John 3:16. That activity, whatever it might be, is done FOR Jesus. We now *pisteuo unto* or **FOR** Jesus.

Once you have that *for* meaning in mind, the decision on which of the meanings best reflects Jesus’ intention is clearly *obeying* or synonymously *committing*. You are serving **for** Christ and His sake alone. You are not obeying to be “seen by men.” (Matt. 6:1.) It is not **for** others. It is not obedience **for** obedience-sake alone. Instead, you have taken on a commitment **for** Him to serve only Him. This is an obedience which you will keep on honoring and doing **for** Jesus’ sake, just as a good servant should be doing.

This completely lines up with John 8:51: “whoever keeps on **obeying** (*tereo*, diligently following) My Teaching should never ever die.”

Thus, John 3:16 is a synonymous way of saying what is clearly said in John 8:51.

You are keeping to your obedience **for** Jesus’ sake, and hence you “should receive eternal life.”

Contrast this with how many read John 3:16. For example, many belief-alone advocates say salvation is for those who “believe in *the fact* that Christ died for your sins.” Or that salvation is for the one who “believes in the *fact that* Jesus was Messiah.” Thus, Stanley says you are saved if you ever once believe or trust in the fact that “Jesus died for your sins.” (*Eternal Security, supra*, at 33-34.)

Yet, that is not the point at all of John 3:16. It is not what *faith* you place *in* Jesus. It is instead about what you are doing *for* Jesus.

The Context And Meaning Of John 3:14-15

There is another key to knowing what Jesus meant in John 3:16. Verse sixteen begins with the conjunction *gar*, rendered “For” or better “Wherefore.” (“**For** God so loved.....”) This means John 3:16 is intended to explain the preceding verses — verse 16 is going to tell us the meaning of John 3:14-15. Thus, by parallel reasoning, John 3:14-15 tells us the meaning of John 3:16 — because verse 16 is meant to reflect 3:14-15. These preceding words were:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up;
(15) that whosoever keep on *pisteuo*-ing may in
(*en*) him have eternal life. (John 3:14-15).²⁰

Jesus in these two verses is equating the story about the way the snake healed people in the Mosaic account and how those who *pisteuo* today will find eternal life in Jesus when He is lifted up.

Jesus in John 3:14-15 is referring to Numbers 21:4-9. There we learn that after the Israelites were led from Egyptian bondage into the wilderness of Sinai, many of them began to murmur against Yahweh. Accordingly, the Lord sent fiery serpents among them as a mode of punishment to bite them. When the people acknowledged their sin of rejecting the manna and sought deliverance, God instructed Moses to fashion a serpent out of brass, and set it upon a standard. Any person who “looked” upon the serpent would live.

20. Please notice this time it is “*in* him have eternal life.” It is still not “believe *in* him.” Here, the “in him” means eternal life is located in Jesus. The one who is *pisteuo*-ing “may in [Jesus] have eternal life.” Vincent *Word Studies* points out that the “*in him*” formula of John 3:15 “*occurs nowhere else in John.*” (VWS, Romans 4:5.)

This concept of *repentance from rejecting manna* and then *continuing to look* in one direction upon the lifted-up serpent is merely another way of saying *repent* and *obey*.

F.F. Bruce, an evangelical scholar and professor of Greek for many years, concurs.

F.F. Bruce says in his *The Gospel of John* (Wm. B. Eerdmans: 1994) at 89:

It was the saving grace of God that healed the bitten Israelites when they believed his word and ***obeyed his command***.

One can see this *looking* implies obedience when you study together two verses: John 1:1 and John 5:19. The verse John 1:1 usually is translated to say that the Word was *with* God. However, the Greek preposition was *pros* — *towards* — God. Jesus was *towards* God. Jesus' whole being was directed to the Father. Then John 5:19 tells us what it means to be ***looking towards*** the Father:

Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he ***seeth*** [Greek, ***blepo***, looking] ***the Father doing***: for what things ***soever he doeth***, these the ***Son also doeth in like manner***. (John 5:19 ASV.)

Thus, when we are looking towards the Son lifted up on the cross, we should be likewise doing whatever we know Jesus was doing on the cross. This is the necessary effect that Jesus' looking at the Father had on Him. Thus, by our looking at Jesus on the cross lifted up like Moses lifted up the brass serpent, we will necessarily plan to imitate Jesus. What was Jesus doing? When we look at the cross, we see Christ's ***obedience*** to the Father. "Not my will, but thy [will] ***keep being done***." (Luke 22:42, translated by Robertson, *Word Pictures*.)

Elsewhere, Jesus makes this plain, saying our ***imitation*** of what He did on the cross — losing one's own life for the sake of someone else — is *crucial* for us individually to later receive *life* (eternal life):

And he that ***doth not take his cross and follow after me***, is ***not worthy*** of me. (39) He that ***findeth his life shall lose it***; and he that ***loseth his life for my sake shall find it***. (Matt. 10:38-39.)

Hence, John 3:14-15 is about a repenting-from-sin people who now want to turn to God and by *looking* up at the healing standard are obeying God. They have to look upon the serpent raised on a standard high just as Moses' instructed them. These repenting humbled people were *pisteuo*-sing just like we are supposed to be *pisteou*-sing. Jesus too will be "lifted up" for us (John 12:32) and like the serpent, when we "look on" the Son and imitate His costly sacrifice, we will be healed and live. He who ***like Jesus*** loses his life for Christ's sake "shall find" life. (Matt. 10:38-39.)

It is also as Jesus says in John 6:40: all who "keep on looking" — present participle active — "on the son and should be *pisteuo eis* Him should be having eternal life." This is a parallelism further accentuating *pisteuo eis* means *obey unto*. The *looking* and the *pisteuo*-ing are synonyms for obeying in that context.

Thus, John 3:14-15 says if we *pisteuo* the way the Israelites did, we too should be healed and live. The *pisteuo* of the Israelites in the story cited one verse prior to John 3:16 is not *mere belief alone*. Rather, it is *repenting from rejecting the manna, turning back to God and then obeying Moses' instruction to look at the object of healing and life*. The whole process is repentance and obedience. With Christ, the looking upon the cross is also meant to imply you must imitate His obedience on the cross.

One cannot misread the Israelite passage to which Jesus refers as salvation by the ***shallow physical act*** of looking at the serpent. We cannot reduce salvation to simply looking at the Cross in our mind's eye, knowing it was the work of redemption. This would be pure gnosticism.

Yet, this is essentially how Bruce Demarest views it in *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton, Illinois: 1997): "For the healing to occur, ***no reli-***

gious work was involved; a person *simply looked* in faith and lived.” (*Id.*, at 259.) Demarest says for us that looking is mere *knowledge* (in Greek *gnosis*) about Jesus and His work: “Foundational to saving faith is *knowledge* of Christ’s person and saving work....” (*Id.*) Demarest is emphasizing salvation by *looking at the cross* and knowing of Jesus’ person and the work at the cross. Demarest thus teaches salvation by mere *gnosis*.

Now we see why the early church taught it was heresy for Marcion to proclaim salvation by *gnosis* (belief in facts-faith alone) without obedience. See page 578 *et seq.*

Therefore, Jesus in John 3:14-15 means only those who have the characteristic of the Israelites who repented from rejecting the manna, who asked God for mercy, who heartily now ate the manna again without grumbling, who then obeyed Moses to look up at the raised serpent, and who finally *pisteuo*-ed and continued to do so (the verb is in the continuous tense) will receive life.

Hence, John 3:16 is an explanation of John 3:14-15. The *gar* that begins 3:16 directly ties into 3:14-15 as an explanation. The word *pisteuo* is used in 3:14-15 again. Because Jesus is analogizing *pisteuo* to the *obedient* looking up by the repentant Israelites on the serpent in the Numbers account, we again know that *obey* should be the translation of *pisteuo* in John 3:16.

Jesus’ Other Uses of Pisteuo and Pistis,-os

In five passages, in particular, Jesus’ usage proves He meant *obeys* by the word *pisteuo* and *obedience* by *pistis*.

Pisteuo Destroyed by Temptation. The second seed in the Parable of the Sower keeps on *pisteuo*-ing for a while, but in time of temptation, falls away and withers (dies). (Luke 8:13.) It thereby becomes lost due to disobedience. Its *pisteuo*-ing was destroyed. Hence, “falling into temptation” is the opposite force that destroys *pisteuo*-ing. Among the vari-

ous dictionary possibilities for *pisteuo* in Luke 8:13 which best contrasts to *temptation* is the meaning *obey*. For *disobedience* (falling into temptation) is the direct antithesis to *obedience*. Hence, Luke 8:13 should be translated that the “second seed keeps on obeying [*pisteuo*] for a while but in time of temptation falls away...” The word *obey* is the correct and hence intended antithesis to the *temptation*.

Heaven-maimed or hell-whole. We have seen Jesus warned the twelve apostles about those who “*pisteuo* unto” Him who become ensnared. (Matt. 18:6; Mark 9:42.) Such *pisteuo*-ing people and the apostles only have two options when so ensnared: they can go to heaven-maimed by cutting off body parts ensnaring them in sin (*i.e.*, causing them to violate God’s commandments) or they will go to hell whole. (Mark 9:42-47.) *Pisteuo* is thus being brought to nothing by *disobedience* in this passage. Hence, this antithesis proves *to obey* is the meaning of *pisteuo* in Matthew 18:6 and Mark 9:42.

The Work of God is Pisteuo. In John 6:27-29, Jesus speaks of *pisteuo* as a work. Obedience is a work; faith is not, even as Paul’s usage proves. (Eph.2:8-9.) See discussion on Footnote 3, page 397. Hence, *pisteuo* means obey in John 6:27-29.

The Servant Who Is Pistos. In a parable of a prudent and faithful servant who ends up suffering weeping and gnashing with the *apiston* (disobedient), Jesus calls the servant initially *pistos*. Every Bible renders *pistos* as *faithful*. That is, the *obedient*. After sin, this servant is punished with the disobedient — those who are *a + pistis*. (Lk 12:42,46.) See page 57-58. In Rev. 2:10, the *faithful* “*pistos*” receives the “crown of life.”

*Another Key Factor: The Wider Context Of
Jesus' Other Words*

The object in view in John 3:16 is that Jesus wants you to have eternal life, correct? The question then is whether Jesus intends you to receive eternal life either:

- by merely *believing* in the fact that you are a sinner and He died for your sins? That is what Charles Stanley and dominant evangelical doctrine insists is the only requirement for you to be given *eternal life*. (Stanley, *Eternal Security*, *supra*, at 33-34.)
- or by *obeying unto Him* as a good servant should.

Here is where this entire book *Jesus' Words on Salvation* serves as mere prologue to make this wider contextual analysis of *pisteuo* in John 3:16. For we have seen Jesus repeatedly emphasized obedience to His commands for salvation-sake. Here are few highlighted passages to consider.

Atonement Is No Benefit Without Appeasement of the One Offended. Jesus said before you bring the “atoning sacrifice” to God’s heart for your plea of mercy you **MUST ABSOLUTELY** have first appeased the one you offended (whether God or man). (Matt. 5:23-24.) (See page 1 *et seq.*)

Jesus said leave your “sacrifice” (*doron*) offering at the “sacrifice altar” and be first “reconciled.” Then and only then “bring the sacrifice” back to God’s altar. Only then will you have atonement *cleanse* you from all sin! Jesus’ doctrine was the same teaching as all the prophets before Him. The prophets taught the ineffectiveness of the atonement for those who had not first repented and been *actually* reconciled to the one whom they had offended. (Jer. 7:22-23; Mic. 6:6-8, Joel 2:13, Hos. 14:1-2; & Mal. 1:10, 3:3-4. Cf. Isaiah 27:9.) Jesus was also simply teaching the principle of “works worthy of repentance.” John the Baptist — the “greatest Prophet” (Matt. 11:11) — also taught these were necessary before one could expect baptism to be effectual. (Matt. 3:7-10). Hence, Jesus

gave a *works-worthy-of-repentance* condition to claim the atonement. This directs *pisteuo* in John 3:16 to more likely be rendered as *obey* than *believe* to fit this truth.

Weeping and Gnashing Parables. All the weeping and gnashing parables are likewise similar warnings of hell to God's servants who suffer from disobedience or lack of fruit.

For example, in Matthew 25:14-30, the servant to whom God gives a talent of gold but who — when the time for examination comes — has produced no fruit is sent to the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus defines this place elsewhere as the “fiery furnace” where sinners are sent by the angels on Judgment Day. (Matt. 13:42.) As Jesus bluntly stated elsewhere, “the tree without good fruit shall be cut down and thrown in the fire.” (Matt 7:19.) Or as Jesus clearly taught in the Metaphor of the Vine — a “branch *in me*” that produces “no fruit” is to be “taken away” and “cast outside” and “burned.” (John 15:2,5-6.)

Sheep and Goats. Another important example is that Jesus says those who call Him Lord, but on the day of judgment are exposed as not having done charity to the brethren will be called to account, and sent to “eternal fire” due to their lack of charity. (Matt. 25:31-46, *viz.* v. 41.) Jesus in direct contrast says those who call Him Lord and do the works of charity “inherit the kingdom.” (v. 34.) (See pages 219 *et seq.*)

Thus, unmistakably Jesus teaches in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats that only those who do works of charity go to heaven, and all others go to “eternal fire.”

Dillow concedes in this parable that “inheriting the kingdom is conditioned *on obedience* and *service* to the King...” (Dillow, *Reign of the Servant Kings, supra*, at 73.) Dillow then further concedes that Jesus' words “are a condition far removed from the New Testament [*i.e.*, the shallow belief-alone translation of Jesus] teaching of justification by faith alone for entrance into heaven.”

Dillow fails to use these facts as an impetus to re-analyze the translation of *pistis* and *pisteuo* in his favorite verses. Instead, faith-alone apologists give us a nonsensical re-interpretation of the parable. They resolve this conflict between Jesus' teaching of salvation-by-obedience and our modern belief-alone doctrine by relegating this parable to only being true during the tribulation period *after* all Christians are gone. Such apologists thereby dismiss it for now.

However, the solution to this dilemma is patently obvious. The doctrine of 'faith alone' needs to be re-evaluated in light of the underlying Greek. Thus, this parable directly points out there must be an error in the common translation of *pistis* and *pisteuo* — ***at least when Jesus is teaching***. *Pisteuo* in Jesus' thinking is frequently not only *believes*. He often must intend *obeys* as His meaning.

Obedience Doctrine in Jesus' Words. Finally, Jesus in several other places makes obedience indispensable, and not something that *belief* alone allows to be recognized as satisfied:

- If you call Jesus 'Lord,' but 'do not do His will,' He will tell you that He never knew you. (Matt. 7:21.)
- "And why call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46.)
- The faithful and good steward who later becomes ***disobedient*** is assigned a place along with the unbelievers/unfaithful outside in darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Luke 12:42-46.) See "The Parable Of The Good Servant Turned Evil" on page 55 *et seq.*

Evangelical Experts' Opinion

Next, we will explore what was the predominant usage throughout the New Testament of the verb *pisteuo* and its noun form, *pistis*.

What do evangelical or Protestant scholars say?

If you listen to one of the foremost evangelical specialists on the meaning of these Greek terms predominantly in the New Testament, this specialist once more vindicates what we have so far established. For in Vine's *Greek Commentary*, he delineates the "**main** elements in faith [*pistis*]... and the corresponding verb, *pisteuo*" so that it connotes the following:

- (1) a firm **conviction**, producing a full acknowledgment of God's revelation or truth, e.g., 2 Thess. 2:11,12;
- (2) a **personal surrender** to Him, John 1:12;
- (3) a **conduct inspired by such surrender**, 2 Cor. 5:7 (Vine, *id.*, at 411).

Vine's means *pistis* (noun) or *pisteuo* (verb) share these characteristics at the very same time. His elements correspond to: 1. trust; 2. striving to obey (compliance); and 3. obedience. Vine's is hence indicating that the *main* meaning in the New Testament is not *credence* alone. Consequently, rarely does *pisteuo* or *pistis* solely mean *belief, faith alone* or mere *intellectual assent or knowledge about a truth or fact*, whether of great spiritual importance or otherwise.

To the same effect is *The Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*. It tells us that in the New Testament *pistis* and the verb *pisteuo* meant primarily to convey salvation by something more than mere belief. It ordinarily means that compliant trust and obedience or strong commitment (surrender) is integral and directly intended as part of the word meaning of either *pisteuo* or *pistis*.

[F]aith is a process involving the entire human person — knowledge and commitment — as he or she advances toward the person of Jesus Christ. The interpersonal aspect of this faith [in the New Testament] makes it akin to the faith of the O[ld] T[estament]. It is **both trust and surrender** to God... it is **obedience** that assimilates the person to the crucified and risen Jesus and bestows the Spirit on the children of God.²¹

With that said, now let's examine texts other than when Jesus speaks that use the word *pisteuo* or its cousins, like *episteusan* in the next discussion.

Apostle John's Personal Usage of Pisteuo

In John 12:42, Apostle John is speaking. In the KJV, it reads:

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many **believed** [*episteusan*] on [*eis*] him; but because of the Pharisees **they did not confess him**, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: (43) For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. (John 12:42-43 KJV.)

In John 12:42, Apostle John uses the verb *episteusan*, which is a word built on *pisteuo*. The prefix *epi* connotes *above the norm, above, on or upon*.

The correct translation should be these rulers “zealously/completely obeyed unto” Jesus.

The prefix *epi* is used to intensify the meaning of what follows. For example, when *epi* precedes *ginosoko*, to know, Vine's says its primary meaning is “to know **thoroughly** (*epi*, ‘intensive’ [of] *ginosko*, ‘to know.’)”²²

These rulers therefore deeply and thoroughly had *pisteuo* unto Jesus, but they would not confess Him. As a result, those who prefer *believe* as the translation cannot dispute these were true believers. Robertson, a Baptist scholar, in his *Word Pictures* says John 12:42 means these were rulers who “**actually** ‘believed on him’ (*episteusan eiv auton*) in their convictions....” (Whether it means *believed* or *obeyed* is postponed for later comment.)

21. Gilles Langevin, “Faith,” *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*. (ed. Rene Latourelle & Rino Fisichella)(New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1994) at 309 (emphasis added).

22. Vine's Commentary on *epiginoska*'s usage in 2Pe 2:20 and 22.

If Robertson — a Baptist scholar — were correct that *pisteuo* meant *believes*, then faith alone doctrine is anyway in perilous trouble. For if true, here are rulers who had truly believed, but clearly were cowards later. Why does this pose a problem for faith alone? Because disobedience to Jesus — failing to confess Him — leads to loss of salvation. How do we know this? Because as moral cowards, God tells us the “cowardly” rulers who once “believed” will be thrown into the “lake of burning sulfur” with “unbelievers.” (Rev.21:8.) Thus, those who *pisteuo* for a time but later turn into cowards go to hell just like any non-believer.

Yet, the true difficulty for faith alone doctrine is that John 12:42 presents an *antithesis* between *episteuosan* and the disobedient failure to confess Jesus. In John 12:42, Apostle John says that this *epi + pisteuo* has ended. He uses the *aurist* verb tense. This means their *pistis* existed intensely for a while and then ended. This is just like happened to the second seed in the Parable of the Sower who at first had *pistis* with *joy* but later falls into temptation, withers and dies. (Luke 8:13.) The *aurist* tense in John 12:42 means an event that lasts for a while has ceased. It does not continue past a finite point. Here *epi + pisteuosan* continued intensely but then ended, replaced by a failure to confess Jesus.

Because in John 12:42, the *pisteuo* stopped upon *cowardice*, we know a moral weakness marked the end of whatever *pisteuo* represented. The *pisteuo* should have saved them had it continued. Hence, this antithesis proves what translation of *pisteuo* here is correct. For *epi + pisteusan* is destroyed by cowardice. *Pisteuo* in this verse does not mean *believed*. Instead, it means *obeyed*.

The confirming proof is familiar. Again, as in John 3:16, the preposition *eis* is directly following the verb — here *episteusan*. Thus, as established previously, *eis* means *for* with non-motion verbs and is wrongly translated as *in* after *pisteuo* — a non-motion verb. The English word *unto* con-

veys the sense of *for*. Which means the Greek verb *pisteuo* within *episteusan* before *eis* means *obey* or *comply*. John 12:42 should likely read in a better translation:

Nevertheless, still also many of the rulers [once] **zealously obeyed unto** Him, but because of the Pharisees they were **not confessing** [Him publicly], so that they should not be expelled from the synagogue. (John 12:42.)

Hence, we can see here that *episteusan* must mean these rulers had obediently followed Jesus at one time. They obeyed joyfully unto Him just like any other valid servant would do. But then they became afraid. They saw their friends and religious associates would scorn them for doing so. So they pulled back. They **betrayed** their earlier commitment to Christ by **disobeying** Him. By not confessing Him openly.

*The Use of Pisteuo By The Greatest Prophet
(John the Baptist) In John 3:36 As Obey*

Evangelical Protestant scholars such as F.F. Bruce will explain that *pisteuo* in John 3:36, which is verbatim the words in John 3:16, means *obey*.

In John 3:36, the speaker is John the Baptist. Jesus said John was the “greatest prophet” before Him. (Matt. 11:11.) Thus, Jesus tells us emphatically what we are about to read is something given under inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In John 3:36, we will see another *pisteuo eis* (for) Jesus — identical to John 3:16 — is in the first half of John 3:36. We refer to it as John 3:36a. This clause is then *negated* in the second half by *disobedience*. We call this clause John 3:36b. As F.F. Bruce will explain, this direct contrast of 3:36a to 3:36b tells us that the speaker intends you to understand *pisteuo* as *obey*. *Pisteuo eis* is identified as something directly destroyed by *disobedience*. Because the direct opposite of disobedience is *obedience*, it tells you that *pisteuo eis* in John

3:36a means *obey*, not *believe*. In other words, disobedience to Jesus does not destroy *belief* in His atonement or Jesus as Messiah. Rather, disobedience destroys obedience. Hence, the contrast in John 3:36 clearly identifies *pisteuo eis* as meaning “obey unto,” standing in contrast to the verb meaning *disobey* in John 3:36b.

Let’s now look carefully at John 3:36 to see this.

Analysis Of John 3:36

First, John the Baptist is clearly amplifying 3:16 in 3:36. He repeats verbatim the salvation formula of John 3:16 but then John provides a competing contrast. John contrasts *pisteuousin eis* with *disobeying* as a warning to the one who is *pisteuo*-ing. Here is what John 3:36 says literally in a correct translation:

He that keeps on **obeying unto** the Son keeps on having eternal life [*cf.* the 3:16 formula], and he that keeps on **disobeying** [*apeitheo*] toward [*to* in Greek] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God keeps on remaining on him.

In 3:36b, the Greek verb *apeitho* has **one and only one** meaning in Greek: *to disobey*.²³ *Cf.* Acts 26:19 (“Oh king Agrippa, I was not **disobedient** (*apeithes*) to the heavenly vision.”); Titus 1:16 (*apeithes*, “**disobedient**” (KJV).)

23. *Apeitheo* only has one Greek meaning: **disobey**. (Liddell-Scott.) This is followed in ASV, RSV, NASV, WEB and GNB. *Cfr.* KJV and Luther’s Bible (“not believe”). Why the difference in the KJV & Luther Bibles? Because Pauline dictionaries of ancient Greek, while admitting “not believe” is a meaning “not found outside our literature,” claim the word *apeitheo* must mean disbelieve when used in Christian literature. (*Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (eds. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker) at 82.) But why? Because unless we adopt an idiosyncratic meaning ‘just for us Christians’ that matches the accepted doctrine of cheap grace, then John 3:36 would undermine our favorite notions about salvation by ‘faith alone,’ and our favorite verse to prove it: John 3:16.

F.F. Bruce says it is clear in the sentence structure that the *pisteusin eis* in the first part of John 3:36a is used “here in antithesis” to *disobedience* in the second part — in John 3:36b. (Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Wm. B. Eerdmans: 1994) at 98.) He says as a result of this antithesis in 3:36, “saving faith comprises believing and **obeying**.” Bruce adds that those who “will **not obey** the son cut themselves off from the benefits of His sin-removing work,” and their “**persistent impertinence** leaves them exposed to the wrath of God....” (F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John, supra*, at 98.)

F.F. Bruce’s conclusion about John 3:36a is highly significant. If you read Bruce with care, he touches little on the issue of what *pisteuo eis* in John 3:16 means about salvation on the page where he directly discusses John 3:16. (See, *id.*, at 89.) Yet, here, when Bruce finally reaches John 3:36, and the same salvation formula is repeated verbatim, Bruce reveals a blockbuster fact. Bruce sees clearly there is more to the *pisteuo*-formula of John 3:16 which re-appears *verbatim* in 3:36a. Bruce precisely relies upon the antithesis between *pisteuo* in 3:36a and *apeitho* in John 3:36b to come to the conclusion *pisteuo* means *obey*, not merely *believes*.

Who is F.F. Bruce? This is the same F.F. Bruce (1910-1990) who impressed evangelicals with his work *New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* He taught Greek for years at the University of Edinburgh. He was the editor of the *Evangelical Quarterly*.

Yet, what Bruce is revealing in his penultimate book before he died was the most profound revelation of all. He sees the *pisteuo* of John 3:16 in the light of John 3:36. He says salvation must depend crucially not just on belief, but on *obedience*. It is John 3:36 that illuminates John 3:16 for F.F. Bruce.

This is also the message of John MacArthur. In his *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Zondervan: 1994), John MacArthur recognizes John 3:36 proves the ‘believing’ in John 3:36a is ended by the disobedience in John 3:36b.

MacArthur says this proves salvation depends on a lasting obedience to Christ's authority, not on a one-time 'believing.' (*Id.* at 39 fn.) Hence, disobedience to Jesus' commands means God's wrath rests on you. MacArthur recognizes this disobedience in John 3:36b is directly a negation of *pisteusin eis* in John 3:36a.

Therefore, when John 3:36b says God's wrath rests on the disobedient, it does so in contrast to those in John 3:36a who keep on *pisteuo*-sing and who otherwise would have kept on having an "eternal life." Prophet John-the-Baptist in John 3:36b meant therefore to put in jeopardy those *pisteuo*-sing in John 3:36a who fall into temptation, thereby breaking the *pistis* they have. It is Luke 8:13 all over again — the seed that is *pisteuo*-ing for a while (typically translated as *believes*), then falls into temptation, withers and dies.

Consequently, we can deduce the meaning of *pisteuson eis* in the first part of John 3:36 as *keep on obeying unto the son*. ***Only an obedience unto Jesus is in direct antithesis to disobedience to the son in 3:36b.***

Hence, this lesson from John the Baptist proves the word *pisteuo* clearly meant only *obey* in John 3:16. For only twenty verses later — John 3:36a — an undeniable prophet of God repeats the very same salvation formula as in John 3:16 but this time the context conclusively demonstrates *pisteuo* means *obeys*. This proves the *pisteuo* back in John 3:16 must have had the same meaning. Thus, the "greatest prophet" (before Christ) did His Lord the greatest service of all. John the Baptist uttered John 3:36 so that all the misconstruction of John 3:16 could easily be removed once an objective and patient examination was made.

Cheap Grace Deflects John 3:36 By Mistranslation

Incidentally, cheap grace translators have deflected John 3:36 from destroying cheap grace by the simple step of mistranslation of *apeitheo*. Please remember that *apeitheo* only has one meaning: *disobey*. Even the evangelical seminary dictionaries which defend *disbelieve* as a meaning admit

the translation as *disbelieve* is “unknown outside our literature.”²⁴ In the table below, you can readily see this key difference between the inaccurate “believe not” translations and the accurate “obey not / disobey” translations.

TABLE 2. John 3:36 — Yet Another Mistranslation?

“Believes Not”	“Obeys Not”
He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that <i>believeth not</i> the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (KJV)	He that believeth [continuous tense] on the Son hath eternal life; but he that <i>obeyeth not</i> the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. (ASV)
He who is believing [N.B. reflects continuous tense correctly] in the Son, hath life age-during; and he who is <i>not believing</i> the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God doth remain upon him. (YLT)	And anyone who believes [continuous tense] in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment. (NLT)
El que cree en el Hijo, tiene vida eterna; mas el que <i>es incrédulo</i> al Hijo, no verá la vida, sino que la ira de Dios está sobre él. (Reina Valera)	Hee that beleueeth in the Sonne, hath euerlasting life, and hee that <i>obeyeth not</i> the Sonne, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. (Geneva Bible 1599)
Chi crede nel Figliuolo ha vita eterna; ma chi <i>rifiuta di credere</i> al Figliuolo non vedrà la vita, ma l'ira di Dio resta sopra lui. (Italian Riveduta Luzzi)	One who believes [continuance tense] in the Son has eternal life, but one who <i>disobeys</i> the Son won't see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (World English Bible)
He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that <i>believeth not</i> the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (Webster Bible 1833)	Whoever believes [continuous tense] in the Son has eternal life; whoever <i>disobeys</i> the Son will not have life, but will remain under God's punishment. (Good News Bible.)

Why this erroneous translation on the left side of the column? This alteration makes it appear that *disbelieving* in Jesus is what brings wrath, not *disobedience* to Jesus. By this alteration, you would then naturally infer that the intended

24. See Footnote 23, page 449.

contrast by John the Baptist is between *disbelieves* on one side (3:36b) with *believes* on the other side (3:36a). Hence, by altering *disobey* to *disbelieve*, this is how the translators supported rendering *pisteuo* as *believes* in 3:36a. Yet, it is built on a complete falsification of what John the Baptist said. As noted before, *apeitho* only has one meaning in Greek: ***to disobey***. It bears repeating that even the scholars who defend this replacement of *disobeys* with *disbelieves* admit that in **all literature outside the Christian scripture, *apeitho* only has one meaning: *disobey***.²⁵

Yet, we are not free to conjecture about a Christian-only meaning to *apeitho*. We especially cannot do so when the only virtue of imagining an idiosyncratic meaning is to insulate the cheap grace gospel from a verse that falsifies it.

Thus, the translations on the left in the table above protect cheap grace doctrine. They do so by falsifying the translation. How can this be honoring God? He told us that we are ***never*** permitted to “subtract” from His Holy word. (Deut. 4:2.) Only the translations on the right are true to God.

What About Paul's Use Of Pistis And Pisteuo?

Introduction

As mentioned above, to understand John 3:16, the Master and Sole Teacher has the privilege of interpreting His own words. We looked at the context of John 3:16. We looked at the context of other lessons of Jesus. We looked at inspired prophets like John the Baptist. We looked at the words of Apostle John — the writer of John 3:16 — who injected his own thoughts in John 12:42. There we saw Apostle John discusses the rulers who had *pisteuo* but contrary to that *pistis* later refuse to *confess* Jesus. The evidence repeat-

25. See Footnote 23, page 449.

edly proves John 3:16 should have been translated as “*obey unto Him*” (Jesus). The verse gives no support that mere belief alone saves or mere belief is all there is to salvation.

The Problem Of Paul

There is no secret here what is the problem weighing against us from changing our perceptions to Jesus’ intentions. Many impose their views of Paul’s doctrines upon Jesus’ words. *They translate Jesus to most closely follow the doctrines they perceive Paul is teaching.*

However, we are not free to invert the relationship between Jesus and Paul so that Paul becomes the Master used to undermine the words and clear meanings of Jesus.

As Kierkegaard pointed out in 1855 in his work *My Task*: “It is of great importance, especially in Protestantism, to straighten out...[the] *inverting* [of] the relationship, and in effect *criticizing Christ by Paul*, the Master by the disciple.”²⁶

Nevertheless, we will now demonstrate that Paul clearly *often* intends *pistis* to mean a *faithfulness* which is destroyed by *disobedience*, unto damnation of even Christians.

We will also see that Paul sometimes means by *pistis* a *faithfulness* in the ‘Old Testament’ sense of *faithful (obedient) living*.

26. This inversion is usually done by not distinguishing Paul from Jesus, and simply labelling anything from Paul as “the Bible,” without any sense of *priority* for Jesus. For example: “As with any single verse or passage, we discern what it teaches by *first filtering* it through what we know the **Bible** [*i.e., Paul*] teaches on the subject at hand. The **Bible** [*i.e., Paul*] is clear that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, not by works of any kind....(Ephesians 2:8-9). So, *any interpretation* which comes to the conclusion that *any... act*, is necessary for salvation, is *a faulty interpretation*.” <http://www.gotquestions.org/baptism-Acts-2-38.html>.

We will also see that Paul *often* teaches that justification is by *obedience* or *faithfulness*, not *belief alone* — a truth hampered from your notice by minimizing translations of Paul's words.

This is not to deny there are *just two or three* problem passages where Paul affirms *pisteuo* or *pistis* in such a way that the meaning is *belief alone*. This is particularly the case in Romans 4:5.

We will address these verses later, in particular the significance of Romans 4:5. We will see how the early church confronted this very problem of the words of Christ versus Paul. We will see clearly how the early apostolic church solved the dilemma. It will no doubt surprise many of you.

Regardless of how the early church resolved this problem, what remains unaltered is that there are abundant proofs that *ordinarily* — except for two or three passages — Paul means *faithfulness* (obedient living) for *pistis*, not *faith* or *belief alone*. This assists us once more in corroborating how Jesus was likely using the noun *pistis* and its verb cousin *pisteuo*.

Romans 10:11 Translates OT “Trust” With Pisteuo

Let's start with Romans 10:11.

Paul uses *pisteuo* in Romans 10:11 to translate a verb in an 'Old Testament' passage which in Hebrew only meant *trust*. Because of the force of the original Isaiah passage, the NIV renders *pisteuo* in Romans 10:11 as *trust* rather than *believe* even though *believe* is how the NIV everywhere else translated *pisteuo* in the New Testament.

As Scripture says, 'Anyone that *trusts* in him will never be put to shame.' (NIV) (Rom. 10:11)

Paul is quoting from Isaiah 28:16.

Why did the NIV translate *pisteuo* in Romans 10:11 into *trust* rather than *believe*? Because the NIV realizes its own version of Isaiah 28:16 renders the word in the underlying OT as *trust* (rely upon and follow). The NIV translates Isaiah 28:16 as “the one who *trusts* will never be dismayed...”

Why didn't the NIV render the Hebrew word as *believes* and then render Romans 10:11 as *believes*, so as to prevent an inconsistency in translating *pisteuo* when used by Paul elsewhere in the New Testament? Because the Hebrew word here was limited to *trust*. It was not *faith* or *believing*. The Hebrew word is not about intellectual assent in a fact about God or belief in a promise. But this then means that the NIV accepted that Paul here used the verb *pisteuo* to mean *trust*. The NIV left us to supposedly believe that Paul intended *pisteuo* everywhere else to mean merely *believing* in some fact about Jesus/the atonement, but here, and here alone, to mean *trust*.

Instead, it should have been a monumental fact that Paul uses in Romans 10:11 *pisteuo* to translate the ‘Old Testament’ word that meant *trust*. Because if this is true, then why should we not have used Romans 10:11 to enlighten us on translating *pisteuo* elsewhere in Paul's writings? To make a comparison to how Jesus likely used *pisteuo*?

Romans 10:11 is an important link back to the ‘Old Testament.’ It unlocks the normal meaning of the word *pisteuo* in the New Testament. The Greek word has variable meanings. We cannot presuppose we know it means the most shallow meaning among all possible options: *belief in* or *intellectual assent to* a fact or truth. It can also mean *trust*, which implies *obedience*. Thus, how to translate *pistis* and *pisteuo* in Jesus and even in Paul's writings is unlocked by witnessing first-hand Paul's own rendering of the word for *trust* in the ‘Old Testament’ by the Greek verb *pisteuo*.

Thus, we know that because the OT equivalent word in Isaiah 28:16 only meant *trust*, and Paul rendered this ‘Old Testament’ word for *trust* by *pisteuo*, we can deduce the cor-

rect usage *throughout the New Testament* would primarily be at least *trust* (which connotes obedience anyway), not *faith* (which connotes mere belief or intellectual assent).

Romans 3:3: Another Proof That *Pistis* Does Not Mean Faith

We read in the American Standard translation of Romans 3:3 the following:

For what if some were without faith? shall their want of faith make of none effect the *faithfulness* [*pistis*] of God? (Rom 3:3 ASV.)

Another meaning for *pistis* is proven here. This verse proves it sometimes certainly must mean *faithfulness*. It would be utter nonsense to render this the “faith of God” or even the “trust of God.” God has no faith in Himself or trust in Himself, which even hard-core Pauline scholars admit.²⁷

Here, *pistis* has only one meaning that fits in Romans 3:3: *faithfulness*, which here means ‘consistent righteous behavior.’ It is comparable to the human activity of *faithfulness* toward God. *Pistis* certainly has nothing to do with *belief* here.

One comment on Romans 3:3 is insightful:

It seems quite clear to me that Paul does not mean by PISTIS what Luther meant by “Glaube” (faith). PISTIS can certainly mean “faith” or “trust,” but it can also mean “faithfulness” as it must in Romans 3:3.²⁸

27. The King James prefers a rendering that makes no sense, and renders this the “faith of God.” Fortunately, this is an isolated phenomenon. See GNB (“faithful”). In fact, those who believe Paul virtually always uses *pistis* to mean *faith*, concede in Romans 3:3 *pistis* must mean *faithfulness*. “The translation ‘faithfulness’ is dictated by the parallel terms as well as the reference to God’s *pistis*.” (Karl P. Donfried, “Paul and the Revisions: Did Luther Really Get It All Wrong?,” *Dialogue: Journal of Theology* Vol. 46, No. 1 (Spring 2007) at 31, 34 (available online).

There is more in Romans 3:3 to learn regarding *pistis*. It also impacts translation of the *apistia* in the first part of the sentence. Ordinarily, and in the ASV quote above, it has *apistia* as “want of belief.” Yet, this is wrong. It mismatches the direct contrast to the *pistis* of God. Thus, the *apistia* — formed by the negative prefix *a* in Greek in front of *pistis* — should be seen as the contrast to the *pistis* of God. Thus, the *pistis* of God, which has to mean *faithfulness* of God, is being contrasted to *apistia* — obviously the *unfaithfulness* of men. This is translated correctly in the American Literal Translation:

For what if some were unfaithful? Their ***unfaithfulness*** [*apistia*] will not make the ***faithfulness*** of God useless, will it? (Rom 3:3 ALT.)

Yet, there is even one more key within this verse that makes certain *apistia* means *unfaithful* in the sense of disobedient.

Where the ALT has “if some were *unfaithful*” the Greek verb is *apisteo*. This combines the *negative* prefix *a* with *pisteuo* which latter verb we find in John 3:16. When the prefix and verb are so combined, the word means in ancient Greek either *to disobey* or *disbelieve*. In context, one can see here it means *disobey*. The ALT changed this into “were unfaithful;” while satisfactory, another more precise meaning that fits the context is *disobey*.

With this background, now look at the entire passage with the underlying Greek verbs and nouns exposed. Here we see *pistis*, *apistia*, and *apisteo* are all dancing around giving us an entirely different concept about *pistis* and *pisteuo* in other contexts. Here *pistis* certainly is not talking about *belief*

28. Michael Palmer (April 1999) posted at <http://lists.ibiblio.org/pipermail/corpus-paul/19990403/000132.html> (accessed 7-1-07).

as *mental assent* for God does not have that about Himself. This *pistis* of God is contrasted with the disobedient unfaithful behavior of men.

For what if some *apisteo*-ed [**disobey-ed**]?
Their *apistia* [**unfaithfulness**] will not make
the *pistis* [**faithfulness**] of God useless, will it?
(Rom 3:3 ALT.)

Thus, the *pistis* of God is the faithful righteous behavior of God. Paul teaches it is not useless merely because men are disobedient and unfaithful. Hence, *pistis* certainly in this context meant *faithfulness*, with an emphasis on *righteous* behavior. We know this because it is contrasted against *disobedient* behavior. We also saw that *a-pisteuo* meant “not obeying” here which re-emphasizes that *pisteuo* should ordinarily be translated to mean *obey* in the New Testament.

Romans 3:22: More Proof *Pistis* Means Faithfulness

A reputable Christian scholar, N.T. Wright (Bishop of Durham, England), in 2005 pointed out that Luther erred in translating *pistis* as *faith* in Romans 3:22. Because it is speaking of the *pistis* “of Jesus,” it can only mean once again *faithfulness*. This is because the text has in Greek a subjective genitive (“faithfulness *of* Christ”) not an objective genitive (“faith *in* Christ”).²⁹

Wright is backed up by George Howard’s scholarly analysis of the Greek. He demonstrated that in the twenty-four times the genitive is used in Paul’s writings, it is used in the *subjective genitive* sense, which means *of*.³⁰

In other words, because it says *of*, not *in*, within the *genitive* used in Greek, Wright explains Romans 3:22 must be speaking of Christ’s *faithfulness*, not Christ’s *faith* in Him-

29.N.T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005) at 47.

30.George Howard, “On the “Faith of Christ,” *Harvard Theological Review* Vol. 60 No. 4 (Oct. 1967) at 459, 459.

self or God. The idea of *pistis* as *faith* when spoken of *Jesus* would be totally incongruous anyway within the verse. Only *faithfulness* makes sense when we speak of *pistis* as of *Christ*.

This notion of Jesus' "faithfulness" here likewise totally matches how Paul speaks elsewhere of "one man's obedience" (Rom. 5:19) as a synonym for the faithfulness (obedience) of Christ. Hence, Paul uses *pistis* in Romans 3:22 to mean *faithfulness (obedience) of Jesus*, not the *faith of Jesus*.

Indeed, in the Gospel accounts we learn Jesus' faithfulness was an obedience unto death to the Father's will. (Matt. 26:39, "if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.")

Weak efforts have been offered in reply to dispute Wright's reading of Romans 3:22, but they are sophistic.³¹

Wright was correct. In fact, Luther could never have been translating properly because he openly defended his translation of Romans 3:22 based upon the Latin text, not the Greek text.³² Even so, Luther actually acknowledges in the quote in Footnote 32, page 462 that the Latin too has a genitive *of*, not *in*. Then how did Luther translate *pistis* as meaning *faith* when the *pistis* "of Jesus" in Romans 3:22 could not possibly be translated as *faith* "in" Himself? If the genitive is revealed, it had to be *faithfulness (not faith) "of Jesus."*

The explanation by Luther is astonishing. In one of the most stunning glosses of a Scripture text, Luther simply suggests he is free to replace the words *of* with *in*, because he prefers an entirely different structure to the sentence. It is unabashed! See Footnote 32, page 462.³³

This is how Luther changed the *faithfulness of Christ* into *faith in Christ*. This is how an example of *pistis* meaning *faithfulness* was erased by Luther, and made into *faith*. Thus, for generations, we lost one clear usage example from Paul that *pistis* meant *faithfulness*. Thanks to Bishop Wright in 2005, this original meaning has now been restored.

We should note that the KJV is correct *grammatically*, revealing the *genetive* construction “of Jesus Christ” in Romans 3:22. However, it mistranslates *pistis* as *faith*. It reads “faith of Jesus Christ.” Yet, again, it is incongruous to speak about the “faith of Jesus” because Jesus cannot make Himself the object of His own belief. He knows who He is.

‘Faithfulness Of Jesus’ Appears Seven Times In Paul’s Writings

By the way, Luther’s erroneous translation of Paul talking about a “faith in Christ” in Romans 3:22 is a translation error which reappears in six other passages in the English New Testament. Luther’s errors in these passages influenced

31. One recent dissent is Karl P. Donfried, “Paul and the Revisions: Did Luther Really Get It All Wrong?,” *Dialogue: Journal of Theology* Vol. 46, No. 1 (Spring 2007) at 31 (available online). Donfried’s argument has numerous flaws, and no valid points. First and most important, Donfried does not deny there is a subjective genetive here — the key issue. Instead, he claims that he reads Luther as saying there is none in the quote in Footnote 32, page 462. But Luther does not say that. In fact, Luther is quoting *Latin*, not Greek which the scholar (Wright) is citing and whom Donfried opposes. Nor does Donfried note that Luther is confessing he is wishing the Latin read differently than it actually reads. The Latin reads exactly as Wright reads the Greek! It is a mystery how Luther came about with his translation even from the Latin! Next, Donfried quotes translations of early church ‘fathers’ who in allusions and paraphrases are translated as talking about ‘faith’ in this verse. However, these English translations of the early Greek and Latin ‘fathers’ prove nothing. The original Latin word *fides* in some of those texts has as much ambiguity as the Greek word *pistis*. One translation error does not support later error. Thus, because these ‘fathers’ were translated as talking about *faith* does not prove Romans 3:22 was translated as *faith* correctly. Finally, Donfried says Wright’s view of *faithfulness* as the correct translation has led to frightening theologies. He cites Bondros’ recent work as an example of where this translation must take you: “The extreme consequences of Wright’s misinterpretation of Paul can be seen in the recent volume by David Bondros, *Paul on the Cross...*” *Id.*, at 35. He then explains Bondros teaches Paul did not believe Christ made atonement for sin, but Christ was merely obedient to being used as an instrument of redemption. This is the big smear by means of a fallacious non-sequitur. Yet, Donfried never actually addressed the key issue: the Greek meaning of the text.

English translations to follow Luther's lead. This has misled millions on the nature of justification in certain passages. *Pistis Christou* appears not only in Romans 3:22, but also in Romans 3:26, Galatians 2:16,20, 3:22, Phil. 3:9, and Ephesians 3:12.

Justification Impacted

Thus, instead of Paul saying God “justifies him who believes *in* Jesus” (Rom. 3:26 KJV), it says God “justifies him who has the *faithfulness of* Jesus” (Romans 3:26) — a major reversal in meaning. If you have the *obedience* Jesus exhibited, God justifies you.³⁴

If Paul had meant instead to say “faith in Jesus” in this verse on justification, he knew how to do it. Paul speaks elsewhere of those who have a “*pistis en Cristos Iesus.*” (Gal. 3:26; Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4.) Similarly, others in the New Testament expressed such a thing as “*pistis en Cristou.*”³⁵ However, Paul never did that in these seven examples. He used a subjective genitive, and did so in particular in this justification verse. When rendered properly, it means you are only justified if you have the “faithfulness of Christ.”

32.Luther unabashedly tried using the Latin version to understand the Greek, but it is incoherent because the Latin genitive is the same as the Greek. Luther wrote: “when it says the faith of Christ (*fides Cristi*) [the LATIN], we must understand faith in Christ (*fides in Cristum*).” (Luther, *Works* (American edition; ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann; Philadelphia and St. Louis: Muhlenberg and Concordia, 1955ff) 25, 242 (Lectures on Romans). This makes no sense even on its face. *Fides Cristi* in Latin means the *faith* or *faith-fulness* of Christ. Luther apparently feels free that he can change this by a gloss of interpretation into *fides in Cristum*. How can you do that? Perhaps we should say that Luther is actually rewriting the verse to say what he would prefer it would have said. But neither does the Latin nor the Greek say what he wishes Romans 3:22 would say about *pistis*.

33.Interestingly, Luther was not always consistent in wiping out the *of* in the translation of the same expression elsewhere. In Galatians 2:20, Luther translated it “dem Glauben *des* Sohnes Gottes.” That is, the “faith *of* the Son of God.”

Hence, the only somewhat correct translation of Romans 3:26 — each rendering the genitive (possessive) properly — appears in Young's Literal, New Revised Standard (1989), Darby's, Douay Rheims ("faith *of* Jesus") and the Spanish Reina Valera (RV "justifica al que es de la fe *de* Jesús"). The only error is that these Bibles each incongruously still translate *pistis* as *faith* (of Jesus) as if Jesus could be believing in Himself or the Father rather than having a *faithfulness* (of Jesus) toward the Father.

Another interesting point is that the KJV has it *faith in Jesus* in Romans 3:26 while in every other of the seven verses, the KJV has the possessive correct in saying *faith of Jesus*. As Steven L. Chambers notes, "the King James version preserved 'the faith *of* Christ' in every instance except Romans 3:26."³⁶ Obviously, the KJV was concerned that any

34. Similarly, Galatians 2:20 should read that "I live in faithfulness, the *faithfulness* which is *of* the son of God." Had Paul not used *pistis...of the Son of God,*" then we would not have been sure how to translate his first use of *pistis* which talks of his own *pistis*. We would not know whether he meant *faithfulness* or *faith*. Yet, by Paul equating it to the *pistis of the Son of God*, we know the latter usage is *faithfulness*. (It is absurd to speak of Jesus having a *faith* in Himself.) Thus, the first *pistis* is intended the same way as the second *pistis*, to demonstrate the similarity between the way Paul says he is living and the way Jesus lived: obediently. Incidentally, in a bizarre argument, Chambers claims Galatians 2:20 has to be read the other way around, so it is "I live in faith, the faith which is *in* the son of God" (*i.e.*, an objective genitive). He claims this avoids *clashing* between how *pistis* reads for "believers" versus how it reads for Jesus. That's totally false. It is the opposite. His reading claims that I have the same faith that was in Jesus Christ. However, that rendering clashes with common sense. Jesus does not have a faith in Himself that I then duplicate. He KNOWS who He is. He doesn't have to have a faith (like myself) in what is not seen. (Rom. 8:24.) Also, it is a subjective genitive, meaning "of"; it does not mean "in." Hence, it is Chamber's argument that causes a ridiculous clash, while *faithfulness* makes perfect sense in both cases. For Chambers' argument, see Steven L. Chambers, "'Faith in Christ,' or the 'Faith of Christ? Pistis Cristou in Paul,'" *Lutheran Theological Review* XII (1999-2000) at 23-24.

more accurate translation of 3:26 would upset justification doctrine. Because that is not at stake in the other six verses, the KJV correctly revealed the possessive “of” meaning.

How Justification In the “Old Testament” Can Assist

Yet, the KJV’s effort to change justification into *faith in Jesus* is an unnecessarily strained translation in light of Hebrew scripture. The Scripture taught in Deuteronomy 6:25 that justification was by *obedience* to God’s law.³⁷

This is also what Habakkuk 2:4 says in a proper translation: “the just shall live by his *faithfulness*.” Apparently Paul is being mistranslated whenever it is claimed he taught justification by *faith* in his quotes from the Habakkuk passage.³⁸ The underlying Hebrew word meant only *faithfulness*.

35. Chambers offers up the argument for consideration that twists this fact around to favor a reading of it as “faith *in* Christ.” This argument says Paul is entitled to have an idiosyncratic (isolated) meaning from all others who express the same thought differently. This argument says: “Paul never uses that construction; he never makes Christ (or God) the object of a preposition following *pistis*. Thus, *pistis Cristou* may well be an alternate, and *uniquely Pauline*, way of expressing ‘faith in Christ.’” (Steven L. Chambers, “‘Faith in Christ,’ or the ‘Faith of Christ? Pistis Cristou in Paul,” *Lutheran Theological Review* XII (1999-2000) at 23 (available online).) Chambers cites (and apparently realizes it is a valid point) Williams’ claim that this argument represents a fundamental logical error. Merely because “Paul does not use *pistis en* or *eis* when he seems to mean ‘faith in Christ’ does not lead to the inverse conclusion that he does mean ‘faith in Christ’ every time he speaks of *pistis Cristou*.” (Chambers, *supra*, at 25, citing Sam K. Williams, “Again Pistis Christou”, *CBQ* 49 (1987), 431-447, at 433-34.) Chambers appears to have a misunderstanding that Paul never says *pistis en Cristou*, which he does in Gal. 3:26; Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4. What Williams is saying is that sometimes Paul appears to mean *in Christ* even when he only says *pistis Cristou*, but this does not support reading *in* into it every time. This is particularly true because Paul in those four cited passages does prove he knows how to say *pistis en Cristou*.

This concept of justification is also what Ezekiel taught about justification. “But if a man be *just*, and do that which is lawful and right.... [and] hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept mine ordinances, to deal truly; he is *just*, he shall *surely live*, saith the Lord Jehovah.” (Eze 18:5,9 ASV.)

Then why translate Paul in Romans 3:26 in a highly dubious way *as if* Paul said one is ‘justified if one has faith *in* Jesus’ rather than what it truly says — God ‘justifies those who have the *faithfulness of* Jesus’? The ‘faith in Jesus’ construction is *at total odds* with not just normal Greek grammar, but also it is *contra-indicated* by every prior clearly *inspired* Scripture on justification. This includes the parable from Jesus of the Prodigal Son (Luke 18:9-14).³⁹

This was the point of two scholars in the late 1950s on how to translate Romans 3:26: Herbert and Torrance.⁴⁰ They emphasized the Hebrew meaning of *faithfulness* in the original word that is ambiguously translated as *pistis* or *pisteuo* in the New Testament. When rendered into English, they said we should opt for *faithfulness* rather than *faith*. The ambiguity inherent in *pistis* and *pisteuo* was lacking in the original Hebrew which was sometimes being quoted (Hab. 2:4). In fact, the Hebrew texts which explained justification made it absolutely certain justification was by *faithfulness*, not *faith*.

That such a choice was necessary was particularly true in Romans 3:26. As Chambers explains: “If *pisteuo*, they argued, actually had the preferred Greek translation of *faithfulness*, as distinct from *faith*, then Paul’s expression would mean that God was continuing” His prior lessons about justification by *faithfulness*.⁴¹ It was a point well-taken, espe-

36. Steven L. Chambers, “‘Faith in Christ,’ or the ‘Faith of Christ? *Pistis Cristou* in Paul,” *Lutheran Theological Review* XII (1999-2000) at 20, 22. (available online).

37. “And it shall be righteousness unto us, if we observe to do all this commandment before Jehovah our God, as he hath commanded us.” Deut. 6:25 ASV.

cially in light of Deuteronomy 6:25 and Habakkuk 2:4, properly translated. The King James translators claimed they were following such pass-through principles — old to new.

Yet, more important, the only suitable meaning of *pistis* when spoken “of Jesus” is *faithfulness*. That is ***the beginning and end of the issue***. It is nonsense to say Jesus believes in Himself. It is also ridiculous to say He believes in God. Thus, instead Paul teaches in Romans 3:26 that justification is for anyone of us who has the “faithfulness (obedience) of Jesus.” Paul here is expressing a doctrine of justification by obedience in imitation of Jesus.

After this digression, let’s return to our proofs that Paul frequently uses *pistis* to mean *faithfulness*, not faith.

2 Thessalonians 1:3-5,8,11: Pistis Must Mean Faithfulness

Paul says God will punish two types with His everlasting vengeance. One type is “those who do not know him” and the second type is “those who ***do not obey*** (*hupakou-*

38. This is extensively discussed in my prior book, *Jesus’ Words Only* (2007) at 274-76 and 507-08. This raises the question whether Paul really meant by *pistis* in translating Habakkuk 2:4 *faith* or *faithfulness*. Because the underlying Hebrew *exclusively* meant *faithfulness* (obedient living), it may be simply an *English* translation error which misperceives Paul as saying *faith* not *faithfulness* in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11 when Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4. Thus, it is conceivable Paul meant that justification is by *faithfulness (obedience)*, not belief (faith) alone even in these two passages. If Paul meant *faithfulness* in both Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11 is what justifies, we have all been misled by the erroneous translations of Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11. This would mean that it was not Paul who was mistranslating the sense of Habakkuk 2:4, but it was the English translators who were mistranslating Paul. Regardless of who is mistranslating whom, even had Paul meant we were justified by belief alone (*mental assent*), this does not permit us to overthrow prophetic statements from Habakkuk, Ezekiel and Moses in Deuteronomy on what *causes* justification. This is the point exhaustively demonstrated in *Jesus’ Words Only* (2007).

39. The twist on Romans 3:26 to ‘faith in Jesus’ also is contra-indicated by Jesus’ doctrine on justification by repentance in the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. See page 27 *et seq.*

ousin) the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” (1:8) Paul prays the

40. A. G. Herbert, “Faithfulness and ‘Faith,’” *Theology* 58 (1955) at 373-79 and Thomas F. Torrance, “One Aspect of the Biblical Conception of Faith,” *Expository Times* 68 (1957) at 111-14. Chambers claimed that their arguments were refuted by James Barr, saying Barr established that *faith*, not *faithfulness* ‘everywhere dominates in the New Testament.’ (See James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford University Press, 1961; repr. London: SCM Press, 1983) 201, *viz.*, at 161-205.) This exaggerates Barr’s claims and the validity of his proof. What Barr said instead was that Torrance was wrong to equate *pistis* necessarily with all the meanings that *emet* had in Hebrew. For the Hebrew concept of *faithfulness* in *emet* had wider implications than *faithfulness* in Greek. Barr means it is improper to read into a Greek definition a wider meaning that only exists in Hebrew. Thus, nothing in Barr says it is wrong to *infer* that Paul meant the meaning of *faithfulness* which is a permissible meaning in Greek when Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4. The reason is clear: we should probably infer Paul used *pistis* as *faithfulness* because Paul *should* have known it meant *faithfulness* at minimum in the Hebrew of Habakkuk 2:4. Paul’s orientation most likely had to be to the Hebrew. (W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1970).) Even if Paul thought only in Greek terms, nothing in the Septuagint Bible’s normal usage conveyed *faith* in the word *pistis* to Paul. As Bishop Robertson said: “the Septuagint... probably never uses *pistis* in our sense of ‘faith’... [s]o at least we can say that *pistis* by itself would not primarily suggest the idea of ‘faith’...” D. W. B. Robinson, “‘Faith of Jesus Christ’—a New Testament Debate,” *The Reformed Theological Review* Vol. 29, no.3 (Sept.-Dec. 1970) at 71-81. For this reason, other scholars point out that Hebert and Torrance are still correct contextually on the meaning of *pistis* being *faithfulness* in Romans 3. See Richard B. Hays in *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (Eerdmans: 2005). He explained: “Barr’s cogent criticisms of Torrance and A.G. Herbert do not however apply to the present exegetical observations about Romans 3. Barr’s basic objection is directed against the linguistically naive assumption that there is a distinctive (Hebraic) ‘fundamental meaning’ that governs the semantic range of... *pistis* in the NT without regard to context and usage.” *Id.*, at 54. Hays, who agrees with my view of *pistis* as *faithfulness* in Romans 3, ends: “My observations here, rather than resting upon an alleged fundamental linguistic equivalence, proceed from the evidence of Paul’s *usage* of these words as functionally equivalent terms within this particular discourse.” *Id.* In scholarly circles, the reading of “faithfulness of Christ” has gained acceptance, following the seminal work in 1981 by Richard Hays entitled *The Faith of Jesus Christ* (2d Ed. 2001). Hays argues that Paul’s wording is not faith *in* Christ, but faithfulness *of* Christ.

Thessalonians, by contrast, will be “*counted worthy* of your calling, and fulfill every desire of *goodness* and every *work* of *pistis*, with power.” (1:11.) Paul glories in their *pistis* “in all your persecutions” that “you endure.” (1:4.) He then importantly says this persecution is “a demonstration (evidence) of the just judgment (*krisis*) of God, to the *end* (*eis*) that you may be counted *worthy of* the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.” (1:5a ALT; 1:5b ASV.) Cf. 2 Tim.2:12 (“If we endure with Him, we shall also reign with Him.”)

Verse 1:5 tells you *pistis* means *faithfulness* in the three uses in this passage. For it ends saying God permits persecution to test them to *make* them “*counted worthy of the kingdom of God*, for which you also suffer.” Nicholl admits Paul says afflictions “function to purify them so that they will be counted worthy of the kingdom and so [they] can inherit it.” (Nicholl-2004: 149-50.) Paul wanted them to “be worthy of their calling.” (1:11.) Jesus said He rejects the many He invites whom He “called [yet] were not worthy.” (Matt. 22:8.) Hence, you are not simply *worthy* by the initial blood-cleansing by Christ or His call. Salvation is not guaranteed by faith alone had no persecution come your way. Rather, Paul says God allows persecution with the “end” or “objective” that by suffering “you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God.”⁴² If faith alone instead were true, no amount of the testing of your endurance in doctrinal belief is necessary to make you worthy of the kingdom. You would in theory be already worthy by faith alone before any persecution. Thus, something other than *faith* alone must be on Paul’s mind of what is being tested. Only *faithfulness* as the meaning of *pistis* makes sense in this passage each time it appears.

41. Steven L. Chambers, “‘Faith in Christ,’ or the ‘Faith of Christ? Pistis Cristou in Paul,” *Lutheran Theological Review XII* (1999-2000) at 22 (available online).

42. Most faith-alone advocates explicate this passage by illogical statements. Calvin for example simply makes an ad hoc statement that “No persecutions can make us worthy of the kingdom of God.” Yet, this is a direct contradiction of what Paul just said was God’s plain purpose!

Twelve Proofs On Paul's Usage Of Pistis As Faithfulness

We clearly have seen *twelve* total times that the only meaning of *pistis* in a passage from Paul is *faithfulness*. See, Romans 3:3 (“faithfulness of God”), Romans 10:11 (the quote of Isaiah where it means “trust”), and seven other verses talking of the “faithfulness of Jesus.” (Romans 3:22, but also in Romans 3:26, Galatians 2:16,20, 3:22, Phil. 3:9, and Ephesians 3:12.) We saw that three times Paul extols the “faithfulness” of the Thessalonians under persecution, who are tested by God so they will be “counted worthy of the kingdom of God.” (2 Thessalonians 1:3-5,8,11.)

These twelve examples are just more proofs of how the word *pisteuo* (related to its noun form *pistis*) should be translated in John 3:16. *Pisteuo* means those who “obey for/unto Him” should have eternal life.

Paul's Doctrine On Disobedience Means He Often Understood Pistis And Pisteuo As Faithfulness/Obey, Not Belief/Believe

Is there further confirmation that in Paul's understanding *pistis* and *pisteuo* were negated by disobedience? If so, then we know Paul ordinarily meant these words respectively meant *faithfulness* (obedient living), not *faith*, unless the context dictates otherwise, as what saves. Otherwise, disobedience could never be relevant to salvation if faith alone is all there is to salvation.

In other words, did Paul ever say a person who had *pistis* could fall by disobedience and lose their salvation/inheritance in heaven? If so, then we would know the correct translation of *pisteuo* (verb) and *pistis* (noun) in Paul's writings is ordinarily *obey* and *faithfulness*, not *believe* and *faith*, unless — to repeat — the *context* makes clear otherwise.

If so, then the impact on our conception of salvation even as sometimes taught by Paul, and *certainly as taught by Jesus in John 3:16*, would be monumental. If salvation is by *faith*, then it is simple, easy and cost-free. If it is by *obeying* and *faithfulness*, it is precarious and costly.

Paul Teaches Disobedience Negates *Pisteuo*

Paul several times expressly stated a Christian who was morally disobedient would lose his salvation. Paul, in fact, feared for himself that unless he cut off the body parts that ensnared himself in sin, he would go to hell whole.

Of course, Paul learned this lesson from Jesus. Our Lord told the apostles that each of them had a stark choice. You can go to heaven only if you maim yourself by the self-discipline of cutting off body parts ensnaring you in sin. Or, you can fail to take such measures to buffet your body, and you will certainly go to hell whole. (Mark 9:42-47.)

Paul says the *very* same thing in 1 Corinthians 9:27. Paul states:

I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage, lest by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disapproved (*adokimos*). (1 Cor. 9:27.) (YLT)

Disapproved or *rejected* is the most literal Greek meaning of *adokimos*. Instead of “disapproved,” the KJV has it “castaway.” Regardless, it is a serious negative condition. Sometimes it is translated as “reprobate.” Every other time the Greek word *adokimos* is used, it is always talking about the lost. (2 Cor. 13:5,6,7, 2 Tim. 3:8, Titus 1:16.)

Thus, Paul held the fear that he might be rejected by God and thus be lost unless he buffeted his body. Consequently, in this verse, Paul shared Jesus’ view on salvation. Jesus taught you can go to heaven-maimed or hell-whole. (Mark 9:42-47.) You can cut off the body part ensnaring you in sin, and have eternal life (heaven maimed) or you can fail to “buffet” your body in such manner, and go to hell whole.

Paul in this verse had Jesus' view that sin, unaddressed by self-discipline over fleshly desire, will cause one to go to hell whole. Even Calvin read Paul's words in the same way. He said it matched Jesus' doctrine that one who begins as a believer must engage in "strenuous perserverance," and it "would be of no avail to have set out boldly on the Christian race if they did not continue to the end." (Calvin quoted in F. Lisco, *The Parables of Jesus* (Philadelphia:1850) at 119.)

Unquestionably, in this passage, Paul applied this principle of heaven-maimed or hell-whole to someone like himself who already had initial *pistis*. Yet, Paul also clearly implied here that his own prior *pistis* is not the sole determinant of salvation. Hence, Paul's concept of *pistis* is ordinarily not *faith*, but *faithfulness*, which can be negated by disobedience — the very thing Paul says in 1 Cor. 9:27 will make him *adokimos* — disapproved, rejected, a castaway, a reprobate. In other words, a lost soul.

While few who sit in the pews of a cheap-grace church ever learn this truth about this passage, an Atlantic Baptist University article says its meaning is clear:

To become disqualified (*adokimos*) is to be ***disallowed from obtaining eschatological salvation because of failing to meet its condition, obedience to God*** (see 2 Cor 13:5-7; 2 Tim 3:8; Titus 1:16; see also Heb 6:8). Implicit in Paul's comments about himself is his warning to the Corinthians that they will likewise become disqualified if they continue their misuse of their freedom [by sinning].⁴³

Titus 1:16. In the same vein, Paul in Titus 1:16 says of those who disobey God's commands yet confess — *homologeo* — God, their good works are *adokimos*. Paul uses this identical expression to say if you *homologeo* that Jesus is Lord, you shall be saved. (Rom. 10:9.) But here Paul says the very same *homologeo* for God is negated by disobedience.

They confess (*homologeō*) that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and **disobedient** [*apeithos*], and unto every good work reprobate [*adokimos*]. (Titus 1:16, KJV.)

The Young's Literal has this: "Unto every good work *disapproved*." In the literal Greek, it means "to every good work *rejected*." Thus, you can confess God, but if your works disobey Him, you deny God and all your good works are disapproved/rejected by God. (They become like filthy rags.) You must be lost despite having confessed God. Paul does not say this proves you never truly "believed." He says instead you "deny" God by disobedience.

Galatians 6:7-9. Paul speaks likewise in Galatians 6:7-9. He says that salvation depends upon not sowing to the flesh — even for a Christian. If you have *pistis* in the next quote, it does not satisfy the *obedience* requirement that Paul simulta-

43. This article is entitled: "The Spirit, The Necessity of Good Works and Final Judgment," <http://www.abu.nb.ca/courses/pauline/Works.htm> (last accessed 11/25/2006). This Atlantic Baptist University course article cites in support G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) at 433-41; C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (2d ed.; London: Black, 1971) at 218. However, not all agree. The Atlantic Baptist article continues:

"According to J. Gundry Volf, Paul uses the term 'disqualified' (*adokimos*) in relation to apostleship or service, not in relation to his final salvation (*Paul and Perseverance: Staying in and Falling Away* (Louisville: Westminster/Knox, 1990) at 233-47). In 1 Cor 9:27a, what Paul renounces is [supposedly] his apostolic rights and Christian freedom, and this not for the sake of obtaining final salvation, but for the sake of obtaining a reward."

In response, the Atlantic Baptist University piece says: "Her argument, however, is not convincing."

More important to us, why would Gundry Volf try to make Paul not repeat what Jesus so clearly teaches in Mark 9:42-47? Why subtract a passage where Paul is in clear agreement with Jesus by spinning it to not be about salvation? The reason is obvious: Paul does not endorse cheap grace here, as he is often read to endorse in other passages.

neously insists upon. This implies that Paul here understood *obedience* was implied in the meaning of the word *pistis*. Obviously, Paul ordinarily meant *faithfulness* (obedient living) not *faith* when he used *pistis*. Paul says:

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who **sows to his sinful nature**, from that nature he will reap **destruction**; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap **eternal life**. Let us not become weary **in doing good**, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest **if we do not give up**. (Gal. 6:7-9 NIV).

CONDITION	RESULT
What you sow	You reap.
If you sow to the sinful nature	You reap destruction.
If you sow to the Spirit	You reap eternal life.
If you do not become weary in doing good = if you do not give up	You will reap a harvest.

The meaning of this passage is clear if you simply notice the conditions and the outcomes. See Table above. Paul is addressing Christians. If they sow to the flesh, they will suffer “destruction.” In contrast, if they “sow to the Spirit,” which is paralleled by the phrase “not become weary in doing good,” they will reap “eternal life.”

Romans 6:22. Another passage to consider is Romans 6:22. Here Paul says the benefit of becoming God’s servant is it should “lead to **holiness**, and the **result is eternal life**.”⁴⁴

On this verse, the Atlantic Baptist University article says the meaning is unequivocal:

44.“But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and **the result is eternal life**.” (Romans 6:22 NIV.)

Paul continues by saying that **the result (“fruit”) of being enslaved to God is holiness (*eis hagasmon*), by which he means practical righteousness or habitual *obedience to God*. The **result (“fruit”) of holiness, moreover, is eternal life**. In other words, in Rom 6:20-22, Paul gives expression to the familiar Jewish idea that eternal life is *conditional upon practical righteousness*; it is significant that Paul does *not say* that the condition of receiving eternal life is *imputed righteousness* or the “righteousness of God”....**

Please note here the purpose or object use of *eis*. This is the preposition we emphasized in John 3:16 means *for*. John 3:16 says he who is *pisteuo*-ing *eis* Christ should be saved. Here in Romans 6:22, becoming God’s servant is the first step whose purpose is to lead to an object: holiness. It is *for* the purpose of making you holy. This is not a one-step of belief that transforms you into a holy person. Becoming God’s servant has the *eis* purpose of making you *holy*. Then the result is *eternal life*.

Romans 2:13. In another passage, Paul ties justification to obedience. Paul writes:

For not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the ***doers of the Law shall be justified***. (Rom 2:13.)

Incidentally, compare this to our prior discussion of Romans 3:26. Paul there said God justifies whoever has the *faithfulness of Jesus*. This means those who imitate Jesus’ obedience are thus justified. (See page 462 *supra*.) This is identical to what Romans 2:13 quoted here literally says in all translations.

Romans 2:6-7. In yet another passage — Romans 2:6-7 — Paul most remarkably of all says that God

will render to every man according to his works: to them that **by patience in well-doing** [*i.e.*, lit. '**endurance in good works**'] seek for glory and honor and incorruption, **eternal life**.

The Greek words translated as 'patience in well-doing' more correctly say *endurance in good works*. Paul thus says 'to those who endure patiently in doing good works, God **will** render eternal life.'

Here, the Atlantic Baptist University article once more comments how clearly this spells out a doctrine contrary to what most suppose Paul taught. The Atlantic Baptist University article states:

Paul clearly affirms that believers will be judged based on what they have done, not on what they have believed. It should be noted that the eschatological judgment to which Paul refers does not presuppose that **the criterion of receiving eschatological salvation** is perfection, but rather **habitual obedience**.⁴⁵

Thus, this passage adds more support to re-interpreting the word *pistis* in Paul's writings to *ordinarily* mean *faithfulness*, not *faith*. This supports the idea that Paul spoke this way in reliance on Jesus likewise teaching these principles.

Colossians 1:22, 23. Similarly, Paul says that *pistis* leads to presenting you holy and blameless unless you fail to continue in *pistis*, and you lose your *steadfastness* in *pistis*. Paul's aim is

to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight IF INDEED YOU CONTINUE⁴⁶ IN **PISTIS**, grounded and steadfast,

45. "The Spirit, The Necessity of Good Works and Final Judgment," <http://www.abu.nb.ca/courses/pauline/Works.htm> (last accessed 11/25/2006).

AND ARE NOT MOVED AWAY from the hope of the gospel... Colossians 1:22,23.

One can see that again *pistis* here must mean *faithfulness*. The *pistis* can be ruined by losing *steadfastness* in the *pistis*. This is how one speaks of *faithfulness*. This is not how you speak about mere *belief* in facts about Jesus or the atonement. Moreover, this passage negates the idea that a *belief* one-time saved you. Instead, Paul says your salvation is tied up in an activity of *pistis* that must continue or otherwise it is in vain or for nothing. *Faithfulness* or *trust*, not *faith*, best fits those characteristics. Finally, the idea of a *mental assent* in the sense of *faith* in the doctrine of *faith alone* cannot be what Paul intended for *pistis here* because he just said *pistis alone* did not save you. Steadfastness or continuance are *also* necessary. To repeat, only *faithfulness (obedient living)* if read into *pistis* can contain a sufficiently broad meaning to make sense of *this* verse.

Thus, while everyone succumbs to translating *pistis* as *faith* here, the notion of *mental assent* does not fit. It should be translated here as *faithfulness*, not *faith*. Paul says it is destroyed by losing *steadfastness* and *not continuing* in the *hope* of salvation. When you lose hope in salvation, Paul is concerned you will no longer bother being faithful anymore. Paul is telling us to remain faithful and do not give up on the hope of salvation. Be steadfast. Be *faithful*.

1 Timothy 5:8. Paul likewise shows how a true Christian's misbehavior denies *pistis* and makes you worse than an unbeliever in this quote:

But if anyone does not provide for his own and especially his household, he has **denied the faith** [*pistis*, trust, pledge] and **is worse than an unbeliever**. (1Ti 5:8 ALT.)

46. The Greek word is *epimeno*. It also means "to stay at or with, to tarry still, still to abide, remain, to persevere."

Thus, once again, we see how the better translation choice for *pistis* is not *faith*, but *pledge*. When a Christian does not provide for his family, he denies the *pledge* of faithfulness you gave to Jesus as Lord. If *pistis* meant *faith*, how would you deny your acceptance of facts (*belief*) by simply misbehavior? But if *pistis* means here *pledge*, you surely deny such a trusting faithful relationship or pledge by misbehavior.

1 Timothy 5:11-15. Paul speaks again similarly about *pistis* in 1 Timothy 5:11-15. In fact, here Paul certainly uses *pistis* not to mean *faith* in the sense of belief in facts about Jesus. In fact, most translations of this passage do not render *pistis* as *faith*, but instead translate *pistis* as *pledge*. This is a reasonable rendition. Yet, if you translate *pistis* here as *pledge* in this next quote, then why not thoroughly revise all of Paul's passages on *pistis* to be about salvation by a *pledge*? A firm *commitment*, *trust* or *faithfulness*? The word *pledge* is a synonym for a most solemn *trust*. When you pledge your honor to a king, it is a promise of *compliance* with the will of that king.

Let's now read 1 Timothy 5:11-15 where we find *pistis* is no longer translated by even the leading translations as *faith* but as *pledge*:

But younger widows refuse: for when they have **waxed wanton against Christ**, they desire to marry; (12) having condemnation, because they have **rejected their first pledge [pistis]**. (13) And withal they learn also to be idle, going about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. (14) I desire therefore that the younger widows marry, bear children, rule the household, give no occasion to the adversary for reviling: (15) for **already some are turned aside after Satan**. (1Ti 5:11-15 ASV.)

Paul says that this wanton sensual desire in them makes them wax *against Christ*. By doing so, they have rejected their *first pistis*. Here Paul is talking identical to Jesus who says in Luke 8:13 that after the second seed hears the word, it at *first accepts* the word with Joy. Then the second seed keeps on *pisteuo*-sing for a while (translated typically as *believes*), but in time of temptation falls away, withers and hence dies. The noun form — *pistis* — in 1 Timothy 5:11-15 and the verb form — *pisteuo* — in Luke 8:13 must be talking of the first *pledge to obey* unto Christ which these persons initially made.

Thus, 1 Timothy 5:11-15 is just one more proof that dictates we can no longer construe Paul's usage of *pistis* or *pisteuo* to always mean faith. Rather, Paul is obviously saying *in these passages* that salvation turns upon *nothing so shallow as mere faith*. Instead, Paul in these passage must be saying salvation turns on *faithfulness*, trust, a pledge or promise of compliance — which are legitimate alternative Greek meanings in standard lexicons.

One can concede that Paul is not always consistent in his usage of *pistis* and *pisteuo*, as we shall discuss. That is not, however, a problem in how to interpret Jesus. It is a problem in how to understand Paul! Nevertheless, Paul clearly often states salvation is not by the shallow notion of *faith alone*. Hence this at minimum gives us further *confirmation* that our choice of how to translate *pisteuo* in John 3:16 conforms to even how Paul *sometimes* (or even often) spoke and taught. *Jesus does not have to strictly agree with every mode of meaning of Paul*. Rather, Paul must strictly always agree with Jesus. If Paul does not, this is proof that Paul is not speaking at that moment with inspiration. A conflict in Paul's usage can never be used to gainsay Christ's meaning. Yet, when Paul agrees with Jesus, it shows how Jesus' meaning even penetrated into *some* or most of the writings of Paul.

The clearest examples are the following four inheritance warnings by Paul. They repeat the true gospel of Jesus Christ, as we previously have seen.

Paul's Four Inheritance Warnings

As the final proof that Paul's concept of *pistis* often must mean *faithfulness*, not *faith*, is Paul's *inheritance* warnings. In four passages Paul clearly said that if a Christian commits various sins (which are cognizable as moral rules from the Mosaic Law), such as covetousness, adultery, etc., this means you shall "not inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. 6:9, Ephesian 5:5-7, Galatians 5:19-21, and 1 Thessalonians 4:6-8.) Jesus said those who "inherit the kingdom" means they have "eternal life." (Matt. 25:34,46. See page 219-20.)

We will discuss these four passages in a moment. The point is, if this is true, then this proves again that Paul *often* is not using *pistis* with its shallow meaning of *faith*. Rather, Paul often instead used it with a more strenuous meaning of *faithfulness*, which includes the notion of *faithful obedience*.

Let's take, for example, 1 Thessalonians 4:6-8, from among these four passages. It clearly is addressing Christians, and says when you act disobediently you "reject God" who has given you His Holy Spirit:

[For] each of you to know how to be acquiring his own vessel [fig., wife] in sanctification and honor, (5) not in lustful passion of desire, just as also the Gentiles, the ones not knowing God, (6) [so as] **not to do wrong and take advantage of his brother** in this matter, because the Lord [is the] avenger concerning all these [things], just as **also we forewarned you** and solemnly testified. (7) For God did not call **us** to impurity [or, immorality], but in sanctification. (8) Therefore, the one rejecting [this] [or, regarding [this] as nothing] **does not reject a person but God, the One having also given His Holy Spirit to you.** (1Th 4:4-8 ALT.)

Or 1 Corinthians 6:8-10, we read similarly:

But **you act unjustly, and you defraud, and these [things to] brothers [and sisters]!** (9)

You know that ***unrighteous [ones] will not inherit [the] kingdom of God***, do you not? ***Stop being led astray*** [fig., being deceived]; neither sexual sinners nor idolaters nor adulterers nor passive partners in male-male sex nor active partners in male-male sex (10) nor covetous [ones] nor thieves nor drunkards nor slanderers [or, abusive persons] ***nor swindlers will inherit [the] kingdom of God***. (1Co 6:8-10 ALT.)

In this 1 Corinthians passage, Paul clearly says that these Christians are acting unjustly toward brothers and sisters. Paul understands these malefactors *have truly* accepted Christ. He then sternly warns them that ***anyone misbehaving will not inherit the kingdom of God***. Actually, someone was leading them astray. Some taught that they safely could act unjustly toward brothers in the faith, or commit this list of sins, and still inherit the kingdom of God. Paul is sternly warning them that the opposite is true.

The passages of Ephesian 5:5-7 and Galatians 5:19-21 are to the same effect. In these two epistles addressed to the “brethren,” Paul warns, as he says he warned them before, that anyone who practices various moral sins “shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Clearly all these passages prove that Paul had an idea that whatever he thought elsewhere about *pisteuo* or *pistis* ***often enough*** he taught *obedience* was implied in their word meanings. Yet, the only definition of *pistis* that works like this is the option to translate it as *faithfulness, trust, or pledge*. Those translations alone connote *obedience*. The meaning of *faith* for *pistis* in these passages, while conceivable, is certainly too shallow to convey what Paul must have intended ***in these passages***.

Even in Passages Where Paul Means Intellectual Assent.

Finally, even when Paul does use *pistis* to mean *faith*, in the sense of *doctrine*, almost every time he uses the word

that way, Paul also says in the *very same context* that the *faith* (doctrine) is denied or negated by ***disobedience to moral rules***. 2 Tim.3:6-8; 2 Cor. 13:5. Thus, Paul was even then still harkening back to a fuller more strenuous meaning about what the *faith* (correct doctrine) entailed.

This is not to deny Paul has verses which teach salvation is by *pistis* without *works* (obedience). (Eph. 2:8-9; Romans 4:4.) But to repeat, this does not raise a problem how to *interpret* Jesus's usage of *pistis* or *pisteuo*. Nor would such evidence in just ***two*** passages refute that Paul clearly ***ordinarily*** used *pistis* and *pisteuo* to mean *faithfulness*.

Rather, the fact Paul has a different program of salvation in these two passages merely raises a problem on how to explain the *contradiction* within Paul's view of salvation. In a moment, we shall discuss the solutions employed by the early Christian church to this dilemma. See "The Problem Of Paul's Belief-Without-Obedience Verses" on page 482.

Conclusion On Ordinary Meaning Of Pistis And Pisteuo In Paul's Writings

As a result of the overwhelming evidence above, unbeknownst to most Christians in the pew, evangelical scholars now agree it is impossible to believe Paul ***consistently*** taught *faith alone* saves. Rather, Paul often taught *faithfulness* saves. As T. Schreiner wrote in *The Law and Its Fulfillment* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993) at 203:

Even though Paul asserts that no one can attain salvation by good works, he also insists that ***no one can be saved without them***, and that ***they are necessary to obtain an eschatological inheritance***.

As the evangelist Charles Finney similarly said: "But he [Paul] has everywhere insisted on good works springing from faith, or the righteousness of faith, ***as indispensable to salvation***." (Finney, *Justification by Faith* (1837).)

Consequently, the entire conception of salvation has been negatively impacted for centuries by translating *pisteuo* (the verb) and *pistis* (the noun) *consistently* as *believe* and *faith* respectively. The primary sense in Jesus' teachings, let alone in other portions of the New Testament, of the word *pisteuo* was always *obey, trust, compliance, etc.* *Pistis* normally means *faithfulness*, not *faith*. This is why Paul could say disobedience (i) was a denial of *pistis* and (ii) was a denial of God who gave His Holy Spirit to you and (iii) causes the loss of the inheritance of the kingdom of God.

The Problem Of Paul's Belief-Without-Obedience Verses

Paul two times teaches salvation by *belief* even if one is still disobedient and has commenced no obedience whatsoever. (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:4-5; *cf.* Romans 10:9.)⁴⁷

Specifically, as evangelical scholars appear all to concur, Paul teaches in Romans 4:5 that a mental assent to a belief without repentance from sin — while you are still ungodly — saves you. (Romans 4:5.)

These two instances of a usage of *pistis* to mean *belief-only* are clear as long as Paul meant by *erga* (works) a synonym for *obedience*. This appears to be Paul's intent.

Yet, the only way to reconcile Paul fully to Jesus is to always read *pistis* as *faithfulness*. Unfortunately for Paul (if we wish to regard him as always inspired), this has serious difficulties within these two passages. Nevertheless, there is one plausible way to read Ephesians 2:8-9 this way so as to fit Jesus. The weight of Romans 4:5 in the opposite direction may make it a Quixotic venture to solve Ephesians 2:8-9 this way. Yet, if Romans 4:5 can ever be reconciled to Christ's teachings, here is a solution to Ephesians 2:8-9.

Ephesians 2:8-9: Can It Fit Jesus' Words?

As to Ephesians 2:8-9, it can fit Jesus' teaching if you read *erga* in Eph. 2:8-9 to mean *visible works*. As a result, then the clause "lest any man should boast" is no longer meant to require the most shallow meaning to *pistis* to keep the risk of boasting to the smallest minimum. Instead, the *boasting* clause would be directed at *erga* as explanation. Thus, Paul would be saying you are saved by "faithfulness, not by works (to be seen by men) lest any man should boast." This means you are saved by obedient living (to internal moral rules from Jesus) rather than by *visible* works. If salva-

47. These verses support salvation by a mental belief without obedience, if "works" means *obedience*. If you are saved by *pistis*, not *erga* (Eph. 2:8-9, 'faith' not 'works') so no one can boast, it sounds like God is so concerned boasting may happen that He has debased salvation so mere *belief in facts*, as distinct from obedience/faithfulness, saves you. Similarly, if you *pisteuo* that God raised Jesus from the dead in Romans 10:9b, then this is condition b of what saves you. This 10:9b says if you believe this fact (*i.e.*, the resurrection) is true, you are assured salvation. The salvation statement in Romans 10:9a, however, runs counter to belief alone. It adds the requirement that if you also *homologeo en stoma* — confess with the mouth — that Jesus is Lord, then you are saved. Confession is often admitted by Paulinists to be a *work*. An action. At least it is not *faith alone*. So there is a quandary hanging over Romans 10:9a versus 10:9b. Finally, in Romans 4:4-5, if you *pisteuo*, but do not have *erga*, Paul shockingly say God justifies you while you are *still* "ungodly." (This apparently says God justified a man who was *unrepentant-about-sin* — at least that is how most Paulinist commentators read it, as we shall see.) See also Phil. 3:8-11. There are various solutions that argue these verses teach salvation by faith and works and not by works alone. (Stulac.) Others claim *erga* means works of the ceremonial law cannot save. However, Paul's negative view about the *entire* law makes that an unconvincing argument. See my prior book, *Jesus' Words Only* (2007), chapter five. Others try to make the case Paul does not *ever* have a "cheap grace" gospel, relying heavily upon Romans 3:7-8. See, Lebedev, "Paul, the Law, Grace and ... 'Cheap Grace,'" *Quodlibet Journal* Vol. 6 No. 3, July - September 2004 (available at <http://www.quodlibet.net/lebedev-grace.shtml>.) Yet, if there is no means of resolution, I offered what I regard is the correct solution about the doctrinal conflict between Jesus and Paul (and Paul with Paul) in my work *Jesus' Words Only* (2007). The title is succinctly the point.

tion were by visible works, Paul means God would be tempting you to boast. Hence, God allegedly created a salvation formula that does not invite boasting because it depends on *internal* faithfulness that only God sees.

The problem is even if you read Ephesians 2:8-9 that way, there is the seemingly impossible hurdle posed by Romans 4:5 where Paul says he who “works not (*ergazomai*), but believes (*pisteuo epi*)⁴⁸ [on] the one justifying the irreverent — ungodly — is being accounted the *pistis* of Him unto [*eis*] righteousness.”

In other words, what this verse says is the one who lacks obedience (works) but is *pisteuo epi* on the One who justifies the ungodly is being reckoned with the faithfulness (*pistis*) of Jesus for righteousness’ sake.⁴⁹

***Pisteuo* In Romans 4:5a**

Here in Romans 4:5a, *pisteuo* by being contrasted with *ergazomai* is contrasting *working* against *pisteuo*-ing. This antithesis would support an *intellectual assent-belief* meaning to *pisteuo* in this verse.

Most troubling of all, Paul in Romans 4:5b says God “justifies the ungodly.”

In light of the fact *works* are irrelevant in this verse, and most concur *repentance-from-sin* is a work, every commentator agrees Paul directly affirms justification *without repentance from sin*.

As Robertson’s *Word Pictures* says: “The man is taken *as he is* and pardoned.” Wesley concurs, saying God had to justify a man while he was “*at that very time*,

48. Vincent sees a small nuance in the fact this says *pisteuo epi*. It carries the idea of “*mental direction* with a view to resting upon.”

49. Please note Romans 4:5 is another instance where *pistis* means *faithfulness*. Paul speaks again about the *pistis* of Jesus. It again must mean faithfulness. It was Jesus’ obedience unto death to which Paul is referring by *pistis* here. However, it is the usage of *pisteuo epi* in the first part of Romans 4:5 that poses the difficulty

ungodly.” Gill insists that Paul means Abraham (in context) was “in *his state of unregeneracy...an ungodly person*” when God justified him. The Geneva notes likewise say: “That makes him *who is wicked in himself* to be just in Christ.” Clarke concurs that Paul speaks of Abraham, and according to Paul: “Abraham...was called *when he was ungodly, i.e. an idolater*; and, on his believing, was freely justified.” Clarke says we are to understand this is the model: justification comes about *without any interior repentance from sin*. The only requirement Paul has in this verse is belief in the goodness and mercy of God. Clarke says:

Abraham’s state and mode in which he was justified, are the plan and rule according to which God purposes to save men; and *as his state was ungodly*, and the mode of *his justification was by faith* in the goodness and mercy of God.

Thus, it is Romans 4:5 which is the *sole basis to ridicule repentance-from-sin as a requirement for salvation* among most evangelicals.

For example, the famous *Ryrie Study Bible* says repentance from sin is “a false addition to faith” when added as a condition of salvation.”⁵⁰

Likewise, Frederick Bruner, on the faculty with the Fuller Theological Seminary, and a prolific evangelical author, insists in his book *Theology of the Holy Spirit* that receipt of the Holy Spirit is “not conditional.” Confession of sin and repentance from sin are “works” which supposedly only hinder simple faith. Bruner insists that repentance is “not something to be done.” Rather, it is God’s gift which enables a person to follow Christ and decide to be baptized.⁵¹ Again

50. Charles Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976) at 1950.

51. Frederick D. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970) at 115, 116, 166.

and again Bruner berates Pentecostal Christians in particular who seek more than Christ's forgiveness at conversion. Bruner declares it is wrong to insist that a convert has some responsibility for meeting conditions such as repentance, obedience, eagerness and the like. All such arguments from Bruner hang principally on Romans 4:5.

*Does Genesis 15:6 Support Paul's
Dispensing With Repentance?*

When Paul in Romans 4:5 makes such a radical departure from Jesus' doctrine of "justification" by repentance from sin,⁵² Paul must have the very best support. Otherwise, we must reject any doctrine, even from Paul, which subtracts from the words of the Lord Jesus. (Deut. 4:2.)

Paul claims he has clear support in Genesis 15:6, citing it in Romans 4:3 to rationalize Romans 4:5.

Yet, Paul relied upon a *mistranslation* of Genesis 15:6 in the Greek Septuagint of 247 B.C.

Twice, Paul quotes from the Septuagint version of Genesis 15:6 — saying "it [faith] was accounted to him for righteousness...." (Romans 4:3; Gal.3:6.) However, *it does not say that in the original Hebrew!* This verse was one of the very many translations errors in the Septuagint.

In 247 B.C., the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek. It is known as the Septuagint Bible. Jewish scholars acknowledge "the Septuagint was translated by *very bad translators*" and "very often the [Septuagint] translators *did not even know what they were reading* and created nonsensical sentences by translating word for word."⁵³ Jerome in the Fourth Century shared Gordon's harsh view of the unreliabil-

52. See the discussion of the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee in "The Repentant Goes Home Justified & The Shallowly Righteous Does Not" on page 27 *et seq.*

53. Nehemiah Gordon, *Hebrew Yeshua vs. Greek Jesus* (Jerusalem: 2006) at 33-34. Gordon is a Jewish scholar who is sympathetic to Jesus.

ity of the Septuagint translation, providing numerous proofs of its fallibility in his correspondence with Augustine.⁵⁴ Scholars likewise note: "Often...the words of the Septuagint do not faithfully reproduce the meanings of the Hebrew Scriptures." (Nicolson, *God's Secretaries* (2004) at 82.)

Then what does the Hebrew say in Genesis 15:6? It is translated more-or-less correctly in the King James:

And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. (Gen 15:6 KJV.)

Well, there is one little license that the King James took. There is no second *he* in the verse. That is an interpolated *he*, as Professor Hamilton will explain in a moment. (There is also no *semicolon*.) It really reads:

And he believed in the LORD and counted it to him for righteousness. (Gen 15:6.)

Who then is the subject of the verb *counted*? Abraham. He is the one *counting* or *reckoning* the promise of a child in old-age in Genesis 15:5 as a righteous deed of God. English syntax is the same as Hebrew syntax. ***The subject of the second clause is the subject of the first clause: here Abraham.*** Thus, this verse never had anything to do with justification ***by God*** of Abraham. God is not the one doing any

54. On the issue of the Septuagint, Jerome had strong views of its rampant error. Thus, in the 4th Century, as he prepared the Vulgate Bible, Jerome told Augustine repeatedly that the Septuagint Greek Bible was rife with deletions (Messianic prophecies quoted by Matthew) and additions from the Hebrew original. He insisted upon using the Hebrew original. For example, Jerome wrote: "[T]he former translation is from the Septuagint; and wherever obelisks are placed, they are designed to indicate that the Seventy have said more than is found in the Hebrew." See "Letters of Jerome (No. 112)," in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Translated into English with Prolegomena and Explanatory Notes under the Editorial Supervision of Henry Wace and Philip Schaff*. (Oxford: Parker; New York: Christian Literature Co., 1890-1900).

of the reckoning in the Hebrew version of Genesis 15:6. Rather, this verse is how Abraham viewed God's promise as righteousness — as a faithful act of God.

The Septuagint changed the subject of *count* to “it,” making it unclear who was *counting* what to whom.

Professor Hamilton, an evangelical scholar of impeccable credentials, concedes Paul relied upon a verse which in the original Hebrew can be read that Abraham is the one doing the reckoning, which **but for** Paul's *understanding*, would have been the correct understanding of the verse.

In Professor Victor P. Hamilton's *New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Eerdmans 1990), we read in Vol. I at 425:

The second part of this verse records Yahweh's response to Abram's exercise of faith: 'he credited it to him as righteousness.' But even here there is a degree of ambiguity. Who credited whom? Of course, one may say that the NT settles the issue, for Paul expressly identifies the subject as God and the indirect object as Abram (Rom. 4:3). ***If we follow normal Hebrew syntax, in which the subject of the first clause is presumed to continue into the next clause if the subject is unexpressed, then the verse's meaning is changed...*** Does *he*, therefore, continue as the logical subject of the second clause? ***The Hebrew of the verse certainly permits this interpretation***, especially when one recalls that *sedāqa* means both 'righteousness' (a theological meaning) and 'justice' (a juridical meaning). The whole verse could then be translated: "Abram put his faith in Yahweh, and ***he [Abram] considered it [the promise of seed(s)] justice.***"

Thus, in the Hebrew original version of this verse, it had nothing to do with justification of Abraham *by God* based upon faith. It was Abraham counting the promise of God in

Genesis 15:5 as righteousness (justice) by God. Professor Hamilton was being honest despite how a true translation would upset Hamilton's own Protestant theology.⁵⁵

Jewish Scholars Concur On Genesis 15:6

Several Jewish scholars concur that in Genesis 15:6b, it is Abraham reckoning God's promise as righteous. It is not God reckoning Abraham as righteous. These scholars were not writing anti-Christian diatribes. Rather, these comments were spoken in ordinary Jewish commentary and lessons.

First, let's examine the analysis of Ramban (Nachmanides, 1194-1270 A.D.) His explanation appears in what is known as *Rabbinic Bible* (Mikraoth Gedoloth).⁵⁶

Ramban says reading God as the *reckoner* of righteousness to Abraham makes no sense in the context. For this would require we find a great faith which God sees as worthy to impute justification. Yet, Ramban asks: "How should [Abraham] not believe in the good tidings?" In other words, no great faith is involved in accepting a beneficial promise. As the Protestant Pastor and Professor, Gaston, comments: "There is certainly no merit in accepting good news." Thus, the more normal reading of the text, clearly indicated by Hebrew syntax, is to see Abraham as the subject who reckons it (the promise) as God's righteous deed. The opposing view

55. Victor P. Hamilton's background is formidable. He is Professor of Bible and Theology at Asbury College. He has a B.A. from Houghton College 1963, a B.D. from Asbury Theological Seminary 1966; a Th.M. Asbury Theological Seminary 1967, an M.A., Brandeis University 1969; and a Ph.D. Brandeis University 1971. Hamilton's commentary is based on his complete translation of Genesis itself.

56. The discussion here derives from an article by the Presbyterian Minister and later professor at various Christian colleges, Lloyd Gaston. The article is entitled "Abraham and the Righteousness of God," in the *Horizons in Biblical Theology. An International Dialogue* (1980) Vol. 2. It was revised and republished as Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and Torah* (UBC: 1987). An excerpt posted with permission of Mr. Gaston can be found at <http://www.jcrelations.net/en/?id=752>.

is counter-indicated because there is no momentous struggle for Abraham to believe a promise which he was already wishing to be true.

Ramban says for these reasons he favors the reading put forth above. He explains: “What would be correct in my judgment is that it is said (or, is to be interpreted as follows): ‘that he believed in the LORD and thought [*i.e.*, counted] that [it represents] the righteousness of the Holy One.’”⁵⁷

This view is shared by the famous Talmudic-era commentary on Exodus known as *Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael*, Beshallah 4 (ed. Jacob Lauterbach)(Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1933) Vol. I at 220. This dates back to the fourth or fifth century A.D.

The *Mekilta* explains Genesis 15:6 in a series of questions and answers by various rabbis. Shemaiah has God explain why He parted the Red Sea: “The faith with which their father Abraham believed in Me is deserving that I should divide the sea for them,” for it is said, “And he believed in the Lord [Gen 15:6a] and “he counted it *unto him for (doing) charity [with his offspring]*.”⁵⁸ That is, the

57. Gaston mentions that Calvin knew of Ramban’s reading but rejected it. Here is Calvin’s analysis: “They also, no less skillfully, corrupt the text, who say that Abram is here ascribing to God the glory of righteousness, seeing that he ventures to acquiesce surely in his promises, acknowledging Him to be faithful and true; for although Moses does not expressly mention the name of God, yet the accustomed method of speaking in the Scriptures removes all ambiguity.” (Calvin, *Genesis* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965) at 406.) Pastor/Professor Gaston comments correctly: “Whether Calvin is apt to be more familiar with the ‘accustomed manner of speaking in the Scriptures’ than Ramban is to be doubted.” (Lloyd Gaston, “Abraham and the Righteousness of God,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology. An International Dialogue* (1980) Vol. 2.)

58. Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and Torah* (UBC: 1987) at 205, quoting from A. Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinical literature* (New York: KTAV, repr. 1968) at 37. *Cfr.* Maureen W. Yeung, *Faith in Jesus and Paul* (doctoral thesis, Aberdeen, University 1999) (Mohr Siebeck, 2002) at 259 (omits “he counted it unto him for (doing) charity [with his offspring]”).

Mekilta means the one who is counting is Abraham. He is counting the promise by God as charity (righteousness) toward his children.

Frequent Mention In Scripture Of the Righteousness Of God

Ramban's and the *Mekilta*'s view of Genesis 15:6 fits well with the many passages where the psalmist gives a praise for God's righteousness. That's all Abraham was doing in Genesis 15:6. He was simply reckoning the promise from God as more proof of the righteousness of God.

One example is Psalm 7:17: "I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his *righteousness*, and I will sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High." (See also Ps 5:7-8; 22:30-31; 31:1; 35: 28; 26:5-6,10; 40:11; 51:13-15; 69:27; 71:14-15a, 18b-19, 24; 88:12; 143:1,11).

Also, Ramban's view matches how God speaks often of His own righteousness: "I will uphold you with the right hand of *my righteousness*." (Isaiah 41:10.)

Most important, Ramban's reading fits both Micah's and Nehemiah's depiction of God's "faithfulness" and "steadfast love" and "righteousness" toward Abraham. This then makes sense of Genesis 15:6 as merely Abraham praising God for the same trait which is prophetically recognized.

Thus, first we read in Micah: "Who is a God like thee, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression?... Thou wilt show *faithfulness* to Jacob and *steadfast love* to Abraham, as thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days of old." (Micah 7:18-20.) God will show righteousness to the sons.

Lastly, we read in Nehemiah, this account of God's dealing with Abraham:

Thou art Jehovah the God, who didst choose Abram, and... gavest him the name of Abraham, (8) and foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanite,....., to give it unto his seed, and hast performed thy words; for *thou art righteous*. (Neh 9:7-8 ASV.)

The pattern is identical between Genesis 15:6, Micah and Nehemiah: there is mention of the promise of seed to Abraham which is then followed by praise of God as “faithful,” having “steadfast love” and He is “righteous.” Thus, it makes perfect sense that Genesis 15:6 is saying Abraham believed God about the promise and then he (Abraham) reckoned it to Him (God) as righteousness.

Similarly, the Apocryphal book of Jubilees has a reference to Abraham as the recipient of God’s righteousness. It follows the normal Hebrew structure of Genesis 15:6 that Hamilton noted. However, this time, there is no room to argue. The text reads: “And Isaac blessed the God of his father Abraham, who had not withdrawn his mercy and *his righteousness* from the sons of his servant Isaac.” Pastor/Professor Gaston interprets this to mean “Abraham and his seed were the recipients of God’s *righteousness*.”⁵⁹

All these commentaries and scriptural references simply repeat what the textual evidence and grammar dictates is the meaning of Genesis 15:6. Abraham was noting God’s righteousness. There was nothing more profound in the passage than that. Hence, it was never a passage having anything to do with God’s imputing any righteousness to Abraham.

The Offering Of Isaac Was A Condition Of God’s Promise

Furthermore, it is impossible that God imputed justification to Abraham in 15:5 in any completed irrevocable sense. For those who teach faith alone, unless justification is irrevocable, and disobedience cannot destroy it, there is no point anyway to fight for the reading they prefer of Genesis 15:6. Yet, in Genesis 22:16-18, God makes it abundantly clear that the promise and any justification were both revocable had there been disobedience. Since that is the case, as we

59. See Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and Torah* (UBC: 1987) at 205 n.45.

shall prove in a moment, the strained reading to make 15:6 prove faith justifies without repentance or need to obey later is a quixotic venture not worthy of any more wasted effort.

For God later makes it clear the promise of Genesis 15:5 will only be fulfilled because Abraham passed the test of his obedience. This destroys any notion that faith alone merited the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, which has crucial implications on modern justification theory. God says:

By my self I have sworn, says YHWH, **because you have done this** and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed **bless you and I will multiply your seed**⁶⁰ ... and by your seed shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, **because you have obeyed my voice**. (Gen 22:16-18.)

If faith in the promise of a blessing and offspring given in Genesis 15:5 supposedly gave permanent justification for Abraham, as some read 15:6, then why did God tell Abraham that had he failed the test with Isaac the promise would have been revoked? In other words, if the belief in the promise made Abraham permanently justified, it must follow that the promise itself was permanent, and not conditional. However, this cannot be true for God says He would have denied what supposedly was a permanently *justified* man the promise had he (Abraham) been later disobedient.

There can be no dispute about this conditionality in Genesis 22. There are two *because's* in the quoted passage. "Because you have done this" and "because you have obeyed," God will keep His promise of Genesis 15:5. "I will indeed bless you and I will multiply your seed...." The negative implication, and hence the message to us, is that had Abraham failed the test, he would have lost the promise. It

60. "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." (Gen 15:5 ASV.)

also follows that a faith which remains alone would never justify. For if God takes back the promise for disobedience, He surely would take back the justification that went with it.

Now it makes perfect sense what James means when he teaches that Abraham was “justified by works” in offering up his son Isaac. Had Abraham failed the test over Isaac, Abraham would have no right to be called just. Hence, justification turns on obedience, and not faith alone, just as James explained.

Was not Abraham our father **justified by works**, in that he **offered up Isaac his son** upon the altar? (22) Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect;... (24) Ye see that **by works a man is justified**, and not by **faith alone**. (James 2:21-22,24.)

Conclusion On Genesis 15:6

Given all these facts, do we have any basis to reject that Jesus is correct that justification initiates by repentance from sin? That’s what the Lord Jesus taught in the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee.⁶¹ That’s what the Bible always taught in the ‘Original Testament.’⁶² That’s what James was explaining about Abraham. It is also self-evident when you examine Genesis chapter twenty-two. Or are we suppose to rely upon Paul merely because he relied upon a mistranslation of Genesis 15:6? Of course not.

Thus, we cannot permit Romans 4:3 and Galatians 3:6 to overturn the original Hebrew reading of Genesis 15:6, the Prophets, and most important of all, the words of Jesus.

61. See page 27 *et seq.*

62. See “Justification In the Law of Moses” on page 33 and “Justification In The Prophets” on page 34 *et seq.*

The Struggle For Mastery Over Doctrine: Jesus Or Paul?

Here is a key juncture for a Christian to make a decision. Who will you trust? Jesus or Paul?

On one side, you have Jesus saying 'justification' comes by repenting from sin in the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. (See page 27 *et seq.*) Jesus in Luke 18:14 uses the same Greek work for "justified" that Paul uses in Romans 4:5: *dikaio*. (See *Interlinear Scripture Analyzer*, free for download off the Internet.)

However, on the other side, you have Paul saying in Romans 4:5 — and most of modern evangelical Christianity insists it is true — that one is *justified in an ungodly state without repentance from sin by mere belief alone*.

Who is right? Jesus or Paul?

The Case For Paul's View of Justification

Well, Paul's proof from Genesis 15:6 cited in Romans 4:3 turned out to be based on a mistranslation! Protestant scholars of pre-eminent status concur with Jewish commentators that the original Hebrew of Genesis 15:6 has *Abraham* as the one doing the reckoning, not God. The only exception to this is *if we are compelled to let Paul serve as authority to rewrite Scripture*. Yet, God prohibits anyone from having such authority. (Deut. 4:2; 13:1-5.)

The Case For Jesus' View Of Justification

What is the case for Jesus' words about justification by repentance-from-sin being more important than Paul's views? That should be easy. Unfortunately, this is where so many are tripped up. *They do not follow Christ as pre-eminent over Paul*. So let's go through this analysis carefully.

We know Jesus is above all. Even the greatest prophet (John the Baptist) compared himself to Jesus and realized his own words were nothing but as a mere man "speaking from the earth" in comparison to the words from Jesus. Prophet John explained why: the words from Jesus — the One who came "from above" — is "above all." (John 3:31.)

In other words, Jesus' words are superior to every other prophet from God! God thereby tests our allegiance.

Can We Reconcile This By Treating Paul As A More Valid 'Dispensation'?

If you think instead that Paul has any equal or greater stature than your Lord, you have inverted things. You are using the "disciple to criticize the Master," as Kierkegaard pointed out in 1855. This involves a fundamental error of how to regard Jesus in relation to anyone else.

It is clearly error to treat Paul's words equally as important or more important than Jesus' words. Jesus told you not to do this even as to a true apostle. (John 13:16, "the *apostolos* is not more important than the one who sent him.")

To those who balk, and still insist they must force an agreement between Jesus and Paul, I reply: you absolutely have no Biblical basis for doing so. For Jesus *never* called Paul an apostle. It is a pure myth that Jesus ever did so! Tertullian pointed this out in 207 A.D.

Tertullian On The Lack Of Corroboration To Paul's Claim Of Apostleship

Tertullian was confronting heretics (Marcion) who were citing Paul to prove salvation by mere belief without obedience. (See page 578 *et seq.*) Tertullian said it was troubling that such reliance was being put upon one (Paul) of whom there is not the slightest proof in the four Gospels or Acts that Jesus ever called him (Paul) *an apostle*. Yes, Jesus called Paul a witness (*martus* in Greek). But Jesus never once called Paul an apostle (*apostolos* in Greek).⁶³ Thus, there is no basis to give Paul whatever authority is assumed to be enjoyed by the twelve apostles.

63. This is thoroughly examined in my prior book, *Jesus' Words Only* (2007) at 215-220 and 408-421.

Here is Tertullian in book five, chapter one, of *Against Marcion* (207 A.D.) rebuffing this zeal for Paul's words ahead of Christ's words:

I desire to hear from Marcion ***the origin of Paul the apostle***. I am a sort of new disciple, having had instruction from no other teacher. For the moment my only belief is that ***nothing ought to be believed without good reason***, and that is believed without good reason which is believed without knowledge of its origin: and ***I must*** with the best of reasons ***approach this inquiry with uneasiness when I find one affirmed to be an apostle, of whom in the list of the apostles in the gospel I find no trace***. So ***when I am told that he [i.e., Paul] was subsequently promoted by our Lord, by now at rest in heaven, I find some lack of foresight in the fact that Christ did not know beforehand that he would have need of him***, but after setting in order the office of apostleship and sending them out upon their duties, considered it necessary, ***on an impulse and not by deliberation, to add another, by compulsion so to speak and not by design*** [i.e., on the Road to Damascus]. So then, shipmaster out of Pontus [i.e., Marcion], supposing you have never accepted into your craft any smuggled or illicit merchandise, have never appropriated or adulterated any cargo, and in the things of God are even more careful and trustworthy, will you please ***tell us under what bill of lading you accepted Paul as apostle, who had stamped him with that mark of distinction, who commended him to you, and who put him in your charge?*** Only so may you with confidence disembark him [i.e., Paul]: only so can he avoid being proved to belong to him who ***has put in evidence all the documents that attest his apostleship***. ***He [i.e., Paul] himself, says Mar-***

cion, claims to be an apostle, and that not from men nor through any man, but through Jesus Christ. **Clearly any man can make claims for himself**: but his claim is **confirmed by another person's attestation**. One person writes the document, another signs it, a third attests the signature, and a fourth enters it in the records. **No man is for himself both claimant and witness**. Besides this, you have found it written that **many will come and say, I am Christ**. If there is one that makes a false claim to be Christ, **much more can there be one who professes that he is an apostle of Christ....** [L]et the apostle, belong to your other god:....⁶⁴

Luke Too Denies Paul The Very Office Paul Claimed

Luke likewise in Acts made it evident there were only twelve apostles for all time, and this excluded Paul. **Never does Paul claim in Acts to be an apostle of Jesus. Never do the apostles in Acts describe Paul as an apostle. Nor does Jesus in the three vision accounts in Acts chapters 9, 22 and 26 ever call Paul an apostle**. Jesus says Paul will be a *martus* — a **witness**, not an *apostolos* — which means *messenger*.

The self-serving flaw in Paul's claim to being an apostle has been recognized by reputable Pauline scholars. For example, John Crossan and Jonathan Reed, in their latest work of 2004 explain:

[I]n all his letters, Paul sees himself as an apostle sent from God through Christ. The very vocation for which Paul lives is **denied him by Luke**. He is, to be sure, an important missionary....But **he is not an apostle** equal to the Twelve.⁶⁵

64. Tertullian, *Against Marcion* (Oxford University Press, 1972) at 509, 511, reprinted online at http://www.tertullian.org/articles/evans_marc/evans_marc_12book5_eng.htm.

Furthermore, Crossan & Reed make the point that Luke's story of how Matthias replaced Judas excludes the possibility of a thirteenth apostle such as Paul. They write:

Luke insists in Acts 1 that, after Jesus' resurrection, there were still, ***always, and only*** 'the twelve apostles.'...For Luke, ***Paul is simply not an apostle.***⁶⁶ Without Matthias' explicit selection, one might have imagined that Luke's Paul was at least implicitly Judas' replacement as the twelfth apostle. With it, ***Luke implies that Paul was not an apostle and could never be one....***[H]e could never be the one thing Paul always insisted that he was, namely, an apostle sent by God through a revelation of the risen Lord. (*Id.*, at 29.)

Jesus Agrees That Twelve Is the Only Number of Apostles

Years after Paul is already dead and after the original eleven apostles already selected Matthias as the twelfth, Jesus reveals to Apostle John in the Book of Revelation that *twelve is the number of apostles for all time*. This verse in Revelation 21:14 follows the mention of the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem. Each gate has a name of the twelve tribes of Israel on it. Revelation 21:14 then says:

The city was built on ***twelve*** foundation stones. On each of the stones was written the

65. John Crossan & Jonathan Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2004) at 29.

66. Luke does describe Paul and Barnabas as messengers from the church at Antioch. In Acts 14:4 and 14, the Greek word for *messenger* is used for them, *apostoli*. However, as the Christian historian Ben Witherington explains: "The use of the term *apostoli* in [Acts] 14:4 and 14 seems to indicate that Paul and Barnabas are being viewed as agents/apostles of the Antioch church (cf. 2 Cor. 8:23), ***not apostles with a capital A.***" (Witherington, *New Testament History* (Baker Academic: 2001) at 229.) In fact, the context clearly shows Paul with Barnabas were merely messengers (*apostolos*) of the church of Antioch.

name of one of the Lamb's *twelve apostles*.
(Rev. 21:14 CEV.)

There is a clear correspondence of one apostle for each of the twelve tribes, gates, and foundation stones. The number each time is only *twelve*. It implies there are not supposed to be more than twelve apostles. You cannot have thirteen or fourteen apostles judging the twelve tribes. Jesus made this clear during His earthly ministry as well. Jesus said the role of the *twelve* apostles was to “sit upon *twelve* thrones, judging the *twelve* tribes of Israel.” (Matt. 19:28.)

What Weight Do Paul's Self-Serving Statements Have?

Thus, the only person to say Paul is an apostle of *Jesus Christ* in the entire New Testament is Paul himself.⁶⁷

Yet, we know that Jesus said if He alone bore witness to Himself, then His witness would be untrue. (John 5:31, “If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.”)

Jesus was extending the Law's principle, so that two witnesses were necessary to establish not only a wrong, but also anything as important as God sending someone for a special role.⁶⁸ In fact, Jesus in Revelation 2:2 clearly agrees a self-serving claim to be His apostle is insufficient proof that you are His apostle.⁶⁹ Therefore, Paul's claim to being an apostle suffers from being self-serving. By a *Biblical* standard from *Jesus Himself*, Paul's self-witness “is not true.”

67. See, e.g., 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Galatians 1:1; 1 Ti. 1:1. See, viz., “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” (1 Cor. 15:9, ASV) and “For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.” (2 Cor. 11:5, ASV.)

68. The Law said that no crime or wrong could be established by a single witness. (Deut. 19:15, “any crime or any wrong”). Jesus taught in event of a dispute over a wrong, obtain witnesses so by “the mouth of two witnesses or three *every word* may be established.” (Mat 18:16.) Why must this principle apply to would-be apostles? Because without two witnesses with *competent knowledge*, one's claim is entirely *self-serving*.

Hence, the notion that Paul is an apostle solely comes from Paul's own epistles. But Jesus told us no one can be their own self-witness for then their witness is "not true." (John 5:31, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.")

NT Era Solution To Paul's Verses On Belief Alone

An early answer within the church to this identical quandary of Paul's *belief alone* verses (at least as 'twisted by some') was to regard such problem verses in Paul as "**difficult to understand**." (Self-contradiction causes uncertainty.)

Hence, the early church taught these belief alone passages were an impermissible basis to stray from what Jesus — our Sole Teacher (Matt. 23:8,10) and Divine Lord — taught us. Second Peter bluntly provides this solution.

Second Peter warned us that Paul says many things that are "difficult to understand" (2 Peter 3:17) and many people twist Paul's words so that they fall from their "steadfastness in Christ" to their own destruction.⁷⁰

69.Revelation 2:2 specifically says the persons on trial "said" they were apostles and the Ephesians properly found these persons were *nevertheless* still liars. Thus, Jesus implied such a self-serving statement of being His apostle does not suffice. Jesus says the claimants were appropriately found to be liars. Therefore, Jesus' own words in Revelation 2:2 agree that self-serving testimony cannot ever be the basis to treat someone as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

70.Second Peter says:

"And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, **according to the wisdom given to him**, wrote unto you; (16) as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are **some things hard to be understood**, which the ignorant and **unstedfast wrest**, as they do also the other scriptures, **unto their own destruction**. (17) Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, **ye fall from your own stedfastness**." (2Pe 3:15-17 ASV.)

Second Peter continues and makes clear that it is *talking about* the doctrines of Paul that are a *cheap grace* — that lead Christians to think accepting Christ one time allows you to sin later and still go to heaven.⁷¹ If you follow the

71. Second Peter goes on and clearly specifies what is the wrong teaching of those who ‘twist’ Paul. They promise that you have *liberty in Christ to sin and remain saved*. Second Peter says: “(17) These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm; for whom the *blackness of darkness hath been reserved*. (18) For, uttering great swelling words of vanity, they *entice in the lusts of the flesh*, by lasciviousness, *those who are just escaping from them that live in error*; (19) *promising them liberty*, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage. (20) For if, *after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the epignosei knowledge [acceptance] of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, they are *again entangled therein and overcome*, the *last state is become worse with them than the first*. (21) For it were *better for them not to have epiginosko known [accepted] the way of righteousness*, than, after knowing [sic: accepting] it, *to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them*. (22) It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog turning to his own vomit again, and the sow *that had washed* to wallowing in the mire.” (2Pe 2:17-22 ASV.) The word *epignosei* and *epiginosko* used in verses 20 and 21 is often mistranslated as *knowledge* and *know* respectively. Yet, not one dictionary definition of *epignosei* includes *knowledge*. The Greek prefix *epi* is meant to convey ‘above the norm, over and above.’ The prefix *epi* thus intends to intensify *ginosko*. Thus, Vines says its primary meaning is “to know *thoroughly* (*epi*, ‘intensive’ [of] *ginosko*, ‘to know.’)” Thus, the definition is some meaning beyond *mere* knowledge. Moreover, to suggest these people “escaped...through [mere] knowledge” of Jesus the evils of the world is silly. These people escaped the *miasmata*, meaning “defilement, stain of guilt” of the *kosmos*. These must be Christians. Thus, *epignosei* obviously is intended to convey that meaning. What *epignosei* means in the *LSJ Middle Lexicon* is essentially (1) to look upon, observe; or (2) “recognize, know again, to *acknowledge or approve*...[iii] to *come to a decision, to resolve, decide*.” The most obvious English synonym that fits the context is “acceptance” and “accept” in verses 20 and 21. Incidentally, Paul uses *epignosei* in the same manner in Titus 1:1 about what saves. There the KJV translates it correctly as “acknowledging [*i.e.*, accepting] the truth.” The same is true of 1 John 2:23 which is discussed in the text.

belief alone implication that lets go of obedience for salvation, Second Peter says you stop following Jesus. You lose your “steadfastness” in Christ.

In fact, what is remarkable is how *clear* this is explained in Second Peter 2:20-21. For it unequivocally says in Greek that it would have been better you never had **accepted** (*epi-ginoska*, not merely *ginoska*) the Lord Jesus Christ than to have **accepted** (*epi-ginoska*) Him, and then be overcome again later by sinning.⁷²

Apostle John likewise used *epignosei* to refer to a saving *epi-gnosis* as long as it continues. Apostle John said anyone who “**epignosei** [continuous tense, *present participle active*] — keeps on **accepting** — the Son also has the Father.” (1 John 2:23.)

This tells us that Second Peter — which uses the same *epignosei* — says it would be better to have never had the Son and Father by *epignose*-ing the Son than to have had them but then be tripped up by a doctrine that licenses sin as salvation-wise safe, and then become lost again.

Unfortunately, rather than heed Second Peter, most evangelicals are subjected to translators who torture Second Peter 2:20-21 so it is neutralized from undermining their ‘free to sin and yet be saved’ doctrine. This teaching is known as Eternal Security which they deduce from Paul’s writings.

Translation Of Second Peter To Obscure Its Meaning

For Second Peter is translated typically so that it no longer speaks about those who “accepted” Jesus. Second Peter really says those accepting Him are falling from salvation due to demoralizing doctrine. In 2 Peter 2:20-21, it ordinarily is translated so that supposedly people who merely *knew* about Jesus fell away by being taught there is a “liberty” to sin as a Christian. Yet, if Second Peter had meant that persons who merely *knew* about Jesus are at issue, the proper

72. See Footnote 71, page 502.

word to use would have been *ginoska* (know). It certainly would not be *epi-ginosko*. A Greek would understand the verb *epi-ginosko* due to the prefix *epi* is intended to intensify the verb *to know*.⁷³ Hence, it could only mean *accept* or *acknowledge* in this context.

Moreover, it appears suspiciously inconsistent to render 1 John 2:23 to say the one who is “**acknowledging** the Son also has the father,” but rendering the same word in 2 Peter 2:20-21 as ‘**know**.’ The effect of the inconsistency is that the reader is misled. The uninformed Christian is led to think Second Peter is concerned about those who never have accepted/acknowledged Christ but merely *know* about Him. Yet, Second Peter is truly warning those who have accepted Christ unto a saving relationship with the Father and Son that they do not realize that it would be better never to have accepted Christ than to listen to a ‘twisting of Paul’s words,’ and be seduced thereby to think that sinning is salvation-safe. Second Peter means it is not possible for a Christian to safely accept such a liberty to sin even when Paul appears to say so.

How Could It Be Better Never To Have Accepted Christ?

Then what does Second Peter mean? Obviously, the only way it would be better never to have accepted Christ is that you not only go to hell, but also you receive extra lashes for *knowingly* flaunting Jesus’ commands based on being led astray by passages in Paul’s writings. Did Jesus ever teach this extra-lashes principle, thus strengthening this reading? Yes, He did!

Jesus taught this in Luke’s Gospel. He spoke about what will happen to disobedient servants of His. Jesus says the ones who actually knew His will but did not do it receive more lashes than the ones who are disobedient but ignorant of

73. See Footnote 71, page 502.

His will. Both types of disobedient servants are in hell, but the ones who receive a worse whipping are the ones who *knew* their Lord's will and still disobeyed:

And that servant, who *knew his lord's will*, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, *shall be beaten with many stripes*; (48) but he that *knew not*, and did things *worthy of stripes*,⁷⁴ shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more. (Luke 12:47-48.)

What should have been the modern response to Second Peter? It should have put us on alert to any and everything Paul says. There is a fatal and destructive message that can be construed from Paul's writings, Second Peter says. This message is identified as a message of "liberty." In context, it is obvious the misleading message is what we call today faith alone doctrine. This *alone* part of the label signifies that no disobedience can destroy your salvation. Faith *alone* supposedly does it all for you. Second Peter yet warns a double dose of damnation for those so duped. For you have accepted the Son, but later became seduced by passages in Paul to break "the holy commandments." (2 Peter 2:21.) Yet, you knew *the Lord Jesus' will* was very different. You knew Jesus said 'repent or perish,' and 'heaven maimed or hell whole' (Mark 9:42-47). Now, for flagrantly disregarding the Lord's will, you will suffer a double portion in hell. That's what Second Peter is bluntly saying.

74. We need to tremble because this teaches *ignorance of the Law is no excuse*. As Lisco says, "even sins which are committed in ignorance are punishable for ignorance itself is guilt. All the subjects of a kingdom are *under an obligation to make themselves acquainted with its laws*, and misconduct from neglect is punishable guilt." Lisco: 254.

Jerome's Low View Of Paul's Writings Akin To Second Peter

Another confirmation that we are reading Second Peter correctly is to examine Jerome's comments about Paul. Jerome translated the Greek NT in 411 A.D. into the Latin Vulgate. Jerome in his Commentary on Galatians and Ephesians wrote: "**Paul** does not know how to develop a hyperbaton [*i.e.*, a change of normal word order for emphasis], nor to conclude a sentence; and having to do with rude people, he has **employed the conceptions**, which, if, at the outset, he had not taken care to announce as spoken after the manner of men, **would have shocked men of good sense**." (Gausson: 119 quoting *Comm. Galatians* Bk 11, titl. Bk 1, i.1; and *Comm. Ephesians* Bk. 11: 3.1.) In other words, unless you read Paul with extreme care, he is unintelligible and appears contradictory of good sense. One can untangle it, Jerome seems to imply. Yet, Jerome also implies it is very difficult treading to do so. Obviously, basing doctrine on Paul was regarded as precarious in the early church.

What Do We Do With Paul's Cheap Grace Verses?

Then what of the cheap grace verses in Paul such as Romans 4:5? For the one following Christ, this is no problem. For we follow Christ, and always remember His words are above all — as the great prophet John the Baptist said.

Thus, we can take the wise path laid out by Second Peter. It warned us that we can never safely reject Jesus' doctrine. If we do so, even if it is in reliance on Paul's "difficult to understand" cheap grace verses, we will fall from our steadfastness in Christ.

Second Peter was telling us that twisting the costly-grace Paul to become the cheap-grace Paul is a waste of a Christian's time and energy. Study the Master — your one and only Teacher (Matt. 23:10) — just as the Master taught. To spend time trying to make the Master who taught a costly-grace Gospel to match a disciple (Paul) when the disciple

cheapens the price of salvation is to invert their relationship. Such an approach makes the disciple the Master, and the Master his inferior, as Kierkegaard warned. God forbid!

Recap On Issues Number One and Two

The big battle is over. *Pisteuo* means *obey* in John 3:16. However, we have other issues to resolve in John 3:16.

Let's review what we have established so far on the translation. Remember what was issue number one as an interpretive issue about John 3:16?

Does the root of the verb *pisteuo* translated in English as *believes* in the KJV and NIV mean *believe* or *obey, comply, trust, etc.*?

And the second issue was related to the first:

Is it *pisteuo* "in" Jesus or "for" Jesus" in the original Greek?

We have demonstrated clearly that the verb at issue in John 3:16 means *obey* in this context. It does not mean *believe*. The proofs were:

- Vine's, TDNT, the NIV Dictionary, and Liddell-Scott say the meaning of *pisteuo* can be *obey, comply, trust, commit, etc.* However, one meaning of the verb *pisteuo* does mean *believe* in a fact or assertion. Yet, when the context here has a verb *not of motion* — *pisteuo* — followed by *eis*, the word *eis* is to be translated as *for/unto*. The function of *pisteuo*, whatever it means, is *for* Jesus, not *in* Jesus. The meaning that makes the best sense is *obey FOR/UNTO* Jesus, as Vincent explained.
- The conservative *Fundamental Dictionary of Theology* said that 'faith' in the New Testament was meant to correspond to the 'Old Testament' concept of faith, which inextricably connects *believing to surrender* (compliance) and *obedience*. Jesus' doctrine connects OT concepts of obedience to the NT *pistis*.
- Jesus' usage of *pisteuo* in Luke 8:13 showed the seed who is *pisteuo*-ing for a while, then "falls into temptation," withers and hence dies. *Pisteuo* is ended by disobedience.

- John the Baptist — the Greatest Prophet before Christ — said in John 3:36 that those who “keep on *pisteuo*-sing” would keep on having eternal life, but those who “keep on *disobeying* the son have the wrath of God continue to abide on them.” As F.F. Bruce maintained, this contrast demonstrates an inspired understanding that those with *pisteuo* should be forewarned that *disobedience* destroys *pisteuo*. The only logical choice for the meaning of *pisteuo* in John 3:36a is *obey*. As Bruce said, all who keep obeying the son are having eternal life, but all those who keep on disobeying the son continue to have the wrath of God abide on them. Thus, John the Baptist used *pisteuo eis* to mean *obey*, not *believe*.
- The usage of other NT writers was comparable. For example, John in John 12:42 spoke of rulers who *epi-pisteuo*-ed for a while, and then their *pistis* ceased due to the sin of cowardice and an unwillingness to confess Christ. John likely meant *obeyed* when he used *epi-pisteuo*, not *believed*.
- Paul in Romans 10:11 used the Greek verb at issue in John 3:16 to render the word *trust* in an ‘Old Testament’ passage from Isaiah. The word in Isaiah’s Hebrew exclusively means *trust*.
- Paul in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11 quotes Habakkuk 2:4. He used *pistis* to translate a word in Hebrew which *only* meant *faithfulness*, not mere belief. Thus, Paul should have understood *faithfulness* as the meaning he was using for justification by *pistis* in those quotes, assuming Paul had a Hebrew knowledge of Habakkuk. Faithfulness means obedient living, not faith. It does not mean belief in some fact or promise.
- Paul in eight passages speaks of the “faithfulness of God” or the “faithfulness of Jesus” by using *pistis*: Romans 3:3; Romans 3:22; Romans 3:26, Galatians 2:16,20, 3:22, Phil. 3:9, and Ephesians 3:12. The alternative notion of *faith* of God or *faith* of Jesus would be a preposterous reading.
- Throughout Paul’s other writings, it is obvious his **primary** intention is to use the same verb *pisteuo* and its noun form *pistis* to mean *faithfulness* (obedient living). Paul’s frequent conception of salvation was that it was lost due to disobedience. This tells us Paul **primarily** meant you are saved by *obedience for Christ*. This is a *faithfulness* which entails *obedience*. Paul accordingly must have used the Greek words *pisteuo* (verb) and

pistis (noun) **primarily** to mean *obey* and *faithfulness*, etc., not to mean *believe* and *faith*. If salvation were by a mere mental belief in some facts about Jesus, then it could not be negated by disobedience in these passages from Paul. However, if salvation was by an *obedience* for Jesus, it would be destroyed by disobedience to Him. Since Paul clearly taught in numerous passages that disobedience causes the loss of salvation, Paul used *pistis* to mean *faithfulness*, not *faith*, in these particular passages.

- It is true Paul had some “difficult to understand” passages, as Second Peter described them, which read differently. This is true in particular of Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 4:5. However, Second Peter marginalized such “liberty” doctrines as “difficult to understand,” and stressed the importance of instead following Jesus’ doctrine — so as to not “lose our steadfastness in Christ.” Thus, even if Paul had *two* verses that were exceptions to his own typical usage, this does not discount the proof of his common usage of *pistis* to mean *faithfulness*. Moreover, the target we are striving to understand is what **Jesus (not Paul)** meant. Jesus is our only “Master” and our “Only Teacher.” Consequently, it matters little that a couple of stray problematical verses from a non-apostle cause bewilderment to understand.

Conclusion On Issues One And Two

Thus, when John 3:16 is translated as “believing in the son,” it more accurately means *that whosoever keeps on obeying unto Jesus* should have eternal life.

The verse is exhorting obedience to His commands, with a reward of eternal life. Consequently, a true definition of the Greek words *pisteuo eis* in John 3:16 rejects any implication that salvation is by belief in any kind of facts about Jesus. Such a faith has nothing do with salvation *in this passage*. ***This verse assures no one of salvation who simply believes in the facts of the resurrection, that Jesus is Lord and Savior, etc.*** That is not what John 3:16 is talking about. It is talking about obedience, compliance, trust, etc.

Issue #3: Continuity Or One Time Pisteousin?

The third issue we identified at the outset was:

Is the verb form taken for *pisteuo* which is translated in the KJV as *believes* (the English simple present tense) instead in Greek a continuous tense meaning? In other words, is the meaning *keeps on* or *continues to* in front of whatever the verb means for *pisteuo*, *i.e.*, keeps on *obeying/complying* or keeps on *believing*?

So is the verb activity of *pisteuo* (whether obey/comply/trust or believes) which ‘should lead to eternal life’ in John 3:16 merely a *one-time* experience or *continuous*?

Stanley and many others insist it is one-time, not continuous. They claim it is heresy, in fact, to insist anyone who loses *pistis* (whether obedience or belief) could be lost.

Yet, this argument ignores that Jesus in the Parable of the Sower teaches in Luke 8:13 that the seed who “*pisteousin* [obeys or believes] for a while” ends up in temptation, becomes withered and hence dead. It is lost. It is obvious that *pisteuo one time* did not save the second seed.

Thus, let’s ask experts how to translate the verb tense in John 3:16. The question is highly narrow: is it a one time *pisteuo* or is it a continuous activity that is required for salvation to be realized?

Synopsis Of Appendix A in Jesus’ Words Only On The Greek Present Active

Appendix A of my prior work *Jesus’ Words Only* (available free online at www.jesuswordsonly.com) discussed the verb tense in John 3:16 in extensive detail. The discussion here is more by way of synopsis than a complete discussion.

In John 3:16, the verb *pisteousin* is in the Greek verb form of *pisteuo* known as the *present participle active*. It is not in the *aorist* tense. Why is the latter fact of importance?

Unlike English, Greek has a specific verb tense for a one-time action. It is known as the *aurist* tense. This can be rendered in English by use of the English Simple Present Tense, *e.g.*, “obeys” or “believes.” We can read “believes” in English to mean a one time expression of faith. In fact, Stanley relies upon the fact *believes* is used in common English translations of John 3:16 to prove salvation must be by a one-time *belief* in Jesus, the atonement, etc.⁷⁵ Stanley is correct that the English Simple Present Tense has this potential one-time meaning. Thus, the use of *believes* in John 3:16 by many translations *corresponds to the aurist participle* in Greek.

By contrast, in Greek, the *exact opposite* meaning from the *aurist* tense is conveyed by the Greek *present indicative active* or *present participle active*. In Greek, these two forms of the present active tense mean the action is continuing. It is best translated into English using “continues to” or “keeps on” in front of the English gerund.⁷⁶

For example, “he who *continues* to obey” or “he who *keeps on* obeying” is a correct translation of the present participle active of the Greek verb *pisteuo* (if it means *obey*).

The present participle active in NT Greek reflects an “habitual behavior.”⁷⁷ It signifies a “process [that is] continuous.”⁷⁸ (This also is still true in modern Greek grammar. *See*, Adams, *Essential Modern Greek Grammar* (1987) at 81.)

75. Stanley says “believes” in John 3:16 means a one-time faith. Stanley explains “believes” — the English simple present tense of *to believe* — can mean a one-time event that does not have to continue. From this, Stanley deduces a one-time faith saves. (Stanley, *Eternal Security of the Believer* (Nelson: 1990) at 95.)

76. See Appendix A: *Greek Issues* to my prior work *Jesus’ Words Only* (2007) for a full discussion. Young’s Literal Translation always renders the Greek present indicative active or the present participle active with “[to be] [verb root] + ing” (*e.g.*, “is going.”). This is the English Present Continuous tense. It is satisfactory. However, to catch the nuance of the Greek, the NIV was correct to use “keeps on” or “continues to...” as it did so often. However, only *Young’s Literal* translation has had the courage so far to fix John 3:16 to read more accurately.

This distinction has been recently confessed by a leading Calvinist who is yet a staunch faith-alone advocate. Dr. James White writes about the verb tense in John 6:35-45 (as well as John 3:16) in *Drawn by the Father: A Summary of John 6:35-45* (Reformation Press: 1999) at 10-11:

Throughout this passage an important truth is presented that again ***might be missed by many English translations***. When Jesus describes the one who comes to him and who ***believes*** in him [3:16, 5:24, 6:35, 37, 40, 47, etc.], he uses the ***present tense*** to describe this coming, ***believing***, or, in other passages, hearing or seeing. The present tense refers to a ***continuous, on-going action***. The Greek contrasts this kind of action against the ***aorist tense***, which is a ***point action***, a single action in time that is ***not on-going***.... The wonderful promises that are provided by Christ are ***not for those who do not truly and continuously believe***. The faith that saves is a living faith, a faith that ***always looks*** to Christ as Lord and Savior. *Id. at 10-11.*

Yet, those obstinate that grace is cheap, like Dillow, make absolutely desperate claims that the present participle active in Greek lacks *any* continuous sense.⁷⁹ This is certainly dogma speaking, not New Testament Greek.

77.Louise Wells, *The Greek Language of Healing from Homer to the New Testament Times* (New York & Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998) at 136 (speaking of the present participle in Matthew 4:23 and 9:35, she say it is “most probably” intended to “describe Jesus’ ***habitual behavior*** while traveling from village to village.”)

78.John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of Paul to the Colossians* (T&T Clark 1884) at 223 (in Colossians 3:10, the Greek for *renew* is present participle active, meaning “man must be brought back to his original purity, but ***the process*** of renovation is ***continuous***, as the use of the ***present participle*** indicates.”) Cf. Edwin Abbott, *Johannine Grammar* (A&C Black: 1906) at 219 (“the present participle means continuousness”).

Dillow is fully cognizant of the impact of a continuous tense translation upon salvation doctrine. Salvation would hang upon the individual's persistence, not *faith alone*. Thus, Dillow fights off the continuous tense meaning with aggressive words. Yet, these shoot himself later in his foot:

That [those claiming a continuous sense] have to hang so much of their argument on the supposed durative force of the present [participle] tense can only be a source of concern. ***A theological system which depends on such things is leaning on a broken reed.*** (*Reign of the Servant Kings, supra*, at 470-71.)

But Dillow's notions of the present participle active, evidently driven by his desire to protect *faith alone* doctrine, are what stand on a broken reed.

Hence, John 3:16 should read instead that God so loved the world that all who "***keep on*** obeying" or "***continue to*** obey" should be having eternal life.

79. Dillow at first admits that "it is true the present tense *sometimes* carry a durative force ('continue')." (*Servant Kings, supra*, at 200.) Then he claims the "present participle... *rarely*, if ever, has durative force...." Next, he says a continuous meaning for the present tense "is not only foreign to normal Greek usage but to usage in English as well." (*Id.*) Dillow is going from one outrageous statement to another. He next says: "The notion that the present tense [in Jn 3:16 having a continuing aspect] is not only contrary to the normal conventions of any language but is not supported by Greek grammar." (*Reign of the Servant Kings, supra*, at 200). Besides this being false for Greek, Dillow is also clearly wrong as to English. "Continuous verb forms [in English] combine a form of *be* with the present participle...to indicate an action in progress or a continuing action, *e.g.*,...I am reading." (Elizabeth Coehlo, *Adding English: A Guide to Teaching in Multilingual Classrooms* (Pippin: 2004) at 76.) I have not misconstrued Dillow. For later he says the Greek present participle active really only has the meaning of a noun. No action is involved. "It acts simply as a noun. So when John refers in [1 Jn] 5:1 to 'everyone who believes,' it is simply a misuse of Greek grammar to insist that John means 'everyone who continues to believe.'" (*Reign of the Servant Kings, supra*, at 470.)

Is It 'Should' Or 'Shall' Have Eternal Life?

Another interpretive question about John 3:16 includes whether the verb for *have eternal life* is preceded by *shall* or *should*. The NIV says John 3:16 is about a promise that you “shall” have eternal life. Yet, the YLT, RV, and Vulgate spell out clearly that it is “should” have eternal life. The word *shall* in English conveys certainty. The word *should* in English conveys a degree of uncertainty.

As explained in my prior book, *Jesus' Words Only* (2007), at 381, the correct translation is *should*.

Source Of Assurance

If salvation is no longer by a simple affirmation of beliefs about Jesus, whence comes assurance of salvation?

Jesus said if we “keep on **listening** and keep on **following**” then “we should not perish” and “**shall** not be taken away (*harpazo*-ed) from my hand.” (John 10:27-28.)⁸⁰

Notice the verbs in John 10:27-28 are *listening* and *following*. Assurance relies upon principles of endurance in synonyms for ongoing obedience: *listening* and *following*.

Conclusion

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever keeps on obeying unto Him should not perish but should have eternal life.” (John 3:16.)

80. Compare this to John 15:2 which says the “branch in me” that does not produce fruit is taken away, later to be thrown outside and burned. (See John 15:2,6.) In John 10:27-28, this same result is avoided by *listening* and *following*. In John 15:5, this same result is avoided by being fruitful which in turn requires that you must “stay in” Jesus, which Jesus then defines as His “word” is abiding in us and His love is abiding in us by “obeying His commandments.” (John 15:7, 10.) Hence, *listening* and *following* means *obeying* with *knowledge* of Jesus’ precepts, commands and teachings.

This was identical as well as a companion verse to John 8:51:

Most positively, I say to you, ***if anyone keeps on obeying (tereo) My word***, he should never ever see death into eternity (*ainon*) [fig., forever]! (John 8:51.)

Unfortunately, this beautiful message from Jesus has been utterly mangled in modern translations of John 3:16. It is obvious this error persists due to a reluctancy to admit the doctrine exuberantly discovered in 1517 in Paul's writings needs to be toned down to make room for Jesus' doctrine.

Thus, the majority who call themselves Christians today have walked away from the ***true Jesus***. They cannot face Jesus in all His bluntness, even when He said, "Every tree without good fruit is cast in the fire" (Matt. 7:19). They insist, Jesus must save them without any good fruit. They often rely on John 3:16 to demand of God that obedience can play no role in salvation. Consequently, one of the greatest tragedies in Biblical translation is that John 3:16 has become ***a salvation-deadening*** verse, by reading it the opposite of its true meaning, rather than a salvation-invigorating verse.

