

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 053

John 20:30-31

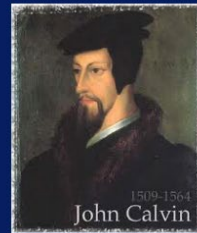
December 14, 2025

Dr. Andy Woods

Let's take our Bibles this morning and open them to John 20:30-31.

Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible

- I. Calvinism's Mixed Blessing
- II. Why Critique Calvinism?
- III. The Source of Calvin's Theology
- IV. Calvin's Manner of Life
- V. TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture
- VI. Conclusion



We are continuing our study "Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible."

V. Running TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture

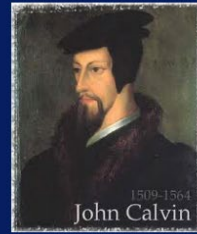
- A. Total Depravity
- B. Unconditional Election
- C. Limited Atonement
- D. Irrresistible Grace
- E. Perseverance of the Saints



As of late, we have been looking at the "P" in the Calvinistic system, "Perseverance of the Saints," which is not eternal security the way they are teaching it today. If eternal security were all Calvinists meant by Perseverance of the Saints, no problem. But it is this idea that you have to persevere till the end of your life in good works and doctrine, or else maybe you are not one of the elect.

E. Perseverance of the Saints

1. Calvinistic definition
2. Examples
3. Problems with the Calvinistic understanding



John Calvin himself said,

"[T]hose who do not persevere unto the end belong not to the calling of God."¹

That is what Calvinists mean by Perseverance of the Saints. Their teaching leaves almost no room for a backslidden Christian, a carnal Christian. Those kinds of concepts are really quickly dismissed in how Neo-Calvinists read the Bible. There is really no room for what we just did in the prayer, as out-of-fellowship Christians praying according to 1 John 1:9, not to restore our position, but rather to restore broken fellowship.

The Calvinists would "pooh-pooh," something like that and say, "Well, we are always in fellowship with God. If you are not in fellowship with God, maybe you are not one of the elect." We have been working through some problems with that understanding. I have given you several, but we are camping here on "h," which actually is the last part of our study.

¹ John Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism: God's Eternal Predestination and Secret Providence* (Reformed Free Publishing Association, Kindle edition from the 2009 2nd edition), Kindle location 532.

3. Problems with the Calvinistic Perseverance Definition

- a) Final salvation is unbiblical
- b) Scriptural examples of non-persevering saints
- c) Support only found in out of context verses
- d) Subtle form of works salvation
- e) Preferability of immediate death following conversion?
- f) Lessens the importance of practical sanctification
- g) Lessens the importance of the Bema Seat warnings
- h) Destroys the assurance of salvation



If you believe Perseverance of the Saints the way the Calvinists teach it, it destroys the assurance of salvation. First John 5:13 tells us that God wants you to know that it is your birthright that you have the assurance of salvation. It is in His written Word that the moment you place your trust in Christ for salvation is the moment that you can know that you have eternal life. The only way you would ever reach that conclusion is through His written Word. John says,

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know..." (1 John 5:13).

That is pretty certain, right? That is not like the weather report. It is one hundred percent certainty.

"...so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

You would only know that because it is written in God's Word.

Lewis Sperry Chafer says,

"There is a normal Christian experience. There are new and blessed emotions and desires. Old things do pass away; and behold all things do become new; but all such experiences are but secondary evidences..."²

So in Calvinistic circles and in Arminian circles, when the whole subject of assurance of salvation comes up, and people ask questions about the assurance of salvation, typically the assurance is given to people if they perform a certain way. "Hey, are you regularly attending church?" "Hey, do you have new desires in your heart?" "Hey, do you have a desire to study the Word that you did not have before?" "Do you hate sin?" "Do you love the brethren?"

It is all about these kinds of subjective experiences. I am not denying God gives those, but they are secondary. The problem with basing your assurance of salvation on

² Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Salvation: A Clear Doctrinal Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 60.

subjective experiences is that you are going to have up days and down days as a Christian. That is what growing Christians go through.

It is like picking the petals off the rose: "She loves me. She loves me not. She loves me. She loves me not." I am saved on Monday. I am not saved on Tuesday. Oh, I am one of the elect on Wednesday. I am not one of the elect on Thursday. You are living in a world amongst the world, the flesh, and the devil, which are three enemies that you inherit the moment you trust Christ.

You may not do so well with those three enemies one day, but you may do great the next day. Therefore you cannot base your assurance of salvation on those things. You look at them as secondary evidences. So if those are secondary evidences, then what is the primary evidence? What is the true north that cannot lie? It is God's written Word.

The moment you place your faith in Christ for salvation is the moment Jesus makes you a promise, and Jesus cannot lie. That is how you know you are saved. Your assurance, therefore, has nothing to do with whether you have an up day tomorrow or a down day. So that is what Chafer is talking about with secondary evidences.

This is not at all emphasized in Calvinistic circles today. When you watch people in Calvinistic circles come to the microphone at question and answer times, and the question is asked—and sometimes your heart almost breaks because it is someone that looks like they are a teenager and their voice is cracking; they are very emotional as they are asking it—"How do I know if I am a Christian?" the answer is given, "Well, have you done this? Have you done that? Do you desire this? Do you desire that?"

If God ever gave me the opportunity to answer that kind of question, I would say that those things I just mentioned are secondary. The primary evidence is the promises of God. You almost never hear that in these Neo-Calvinist circles. The Arminians are worse in the sense that they say, "Well, you were saved yesterday, but now you lost your salvation, so you need to get saved again."

Because Calvinism and Arminianism control the market share, almost anybody you listen to, anybody you read, if you are not going to particular authors, they are going to give you one of those two answers. You are either inundated with Calvinism, meaning that you are not persevering enough, so maybe you never receive Christ on the front end; or you are in an Arminian environment where they are saying, "Well, you were saved, but you lost your salvation."

I believe that both systems are destroying something that God wants you to know you possess as your birthright, which is not just eternal security, it is that you can know with one hundred percent certainty that you possess eternal security. As long as you are doing this introspective game, looking at yourself all the time, you are never going to develop an assurance of salvation. It is something that only comes through the written Word of God—1 John 5:13; John 5:24; etc.

I have given you some quotes on how this Perseverance of the Saints doctrine is destroying the assurance of salvation. I have shown you the quote from the

Westminster Confession, which is Calvinistic to its core. It has a section on the assurance of salvation. It says,

"This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith,..."³

In other words, you do not know if you possess the assurance of salvation just because you trusted in Christ. "Well, then how do I get the assurance of salvation?"

"...but that a true believer..."⁴

Notice the distinction here between true believers and not-true believers. Whenever you are seeing the word "true" in front of the word believer, you are seeing a Calvinistic understanding, because the true believers are those that have been given the gift of faith, and their faith does not waver. The fake believers are the believers that just trusted in Christ through their own volition. The former are the elect. The latter are not the elect.

You do not know if you are elect or not elect unless there is evidence of fruit of perseverance in your life. That is what the Calvinists mean when they say,

"This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer will wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be a partaker of it."⁵

So before you can have the assurance of salvation, according to Calvinistic system, you have to wait a long time to get that. You have to go through many difficulties before you get it, because we really do not know if your faith is the right faith, the genuine faith that God imparts as a gift.

That is what Jesus said on the cross, right? "Hey, Jesus, remember me when you enter Your kingdom." "Well, you are going to have to wait a little while and go through a few difficulties before you can partake of it." As you know, the crucifixion was gradual. It was not instantaneous death; it was suffocation. "You have to go through many difficulties before you can partake of it."

Jesus said nothing like that to the thief on the cross. The moment the thief exercised faith in the Messiah was the moment Jesus said to him, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (paraphrase, Luke 23:43). It is not just "Hang in there, buddy [no pun intended], let's see how the next few hours go. Let's see if you curse God when you are dying or not."

There is nothing like that. Jesus gave the thief instantaneous assurance of salvation, which is yours as a birthright, which Calvinism, the way it is being taught today, denies.

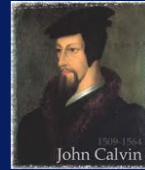
³ Westminster Confession Chapter XVIII, Article III – Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

h) Destroys the Assurance of Salvation

- 1) The Biblical View of the Assurance of Salvation
- 2) Examples of How the "Perseverance of the Saints" Destroys the Assurance of Salvation
- 3) **Calvinism's "Two Kinds of Faith" Doctrine damages the Assurance of Salvation**



One of the most pernicious doctrines in this whole thing is the doctrine of two kinds of faith. There is the faith that saves and the faith that does not save. I gave you this quote from William Hendriksen, who writes,

"Not all faith is saving faith..."⁶

He must be right, because he wrote this in an academic commentary, and who am I to second guess him? If I just carte blanche believe what he says, then I spend the rest of my life wondering if I have the right kind of faith or not. How would I ever know? Well, you cannot know. We just have to see the course of your life to determine if you have the right kind of faith.

What just got stolen from you is the assurance of your salvation. Faith is very, very simple. It is not complicated. Faith, as we have said before, using this quote, means trust, confidence, and reliance. It is used ninety-nine times in John's Gospel, which is the only Gospel that we have which was written to unsaved people (that we are aware of).

The reason God has set salvation up this way is based on Romans 4:5. Faith is not a work in the mind of God. Romans 4:5 says,

"But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness," (Romans 4:5).

Faith, which has to incorporate the notion of trust, is the only thing which is non-meritorious that a lost sinner can do before a holy God. If my salvation comes from my ability to correct the ship—"Clean yourself up and come to Jesus."—then it is a work. If my salvation comes from my ability to work up enough courage to walk an altar call, it is a work.

⁶ William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 3d ed. (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1964), p. 127. (1978). *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 135. (1978). *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 135.

I am not *carte blanche* against altar calls, but I am afraid that a lot of people do not really understand that coming forward or not coming forward does not save anybody. If my salvation comes from my capacity to work up enough courage to come forward, then that is nothing more than salvation by works.

If my salvation comes from raising a hand or giving money or whatever the condition that is being held out is—if it comes from those things, then it is a work. God does not justify people on the basis of works. He justifies people on the basis of something that is completely and totally non-meritorious. There is only one thing that satisfies the mind of God on that issue, which is to believe.

"But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness," (Romans 4:5).

Romans 4:5 alludes to Genesis 15:6, which says how Abram was saved. Paul loves to quote Genesis 15:6. What Paul is describing here is how God has justified everyone throughout human history. Let's go back to the very first progenitor of the nation of Israel, Abram. How was he saved? There are no works there. There is no purified lifestyle, because he messed everything up in the next chapter. So he, in a certain sense, did not persevere for even one chapter.

So how did Abram get justified before God? He was an idolater, Joshua 24:2 says. When Abram was called from the Ur of the Chaldeans, he was just steeped in *carte blanche* idolatry. He was just like anybody else. It is just that God had a purpose for him to form a special nation through him called the nation of Israel.

How was Abram even justified before God? Genesis 15:6 could not be clearer: Abram believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness. Abram understood not just the principle of seeds, plural, coming from him, but there would be a seed, a collective singular. It is a word that can be used in the singular or the plural.

God gave Abram the promise of seeds, plural. But according to Galatians 3:16, Abram believed those promises, and he also believed that from the seeds, plural, would come a seed (he did not know his name, Jesus Christ). Abram received salvation on credit, as Abram believed what that seed would do, already being spelled out before the time of Abraham in Genesis 3:15.

Abram, with the knowledge of those simple facts, simply believed what that seed, singular, coming from his collective plural seed, would do in his place. He did not know His name. He was looking forward. He received salvation on credit. It was credited to him as righteousness.

Now we all know what credit is, right? At Christmas time—we know it really well. Credit is when you give somebody your piece of plastic—your bondage card, as I call it—you give them your bondage card and you get all the goodies and you do not have to pay for a while. So that is what Abram got. I am not trying to trivialize it. I am just trying to say that he got it on credit, because it had not been paid for yet.

With Jesus and us, it has been paid for. So we are not receiving it on credit. We are not looking forward the way Abraham did. We are not looking 2,000 years forward. We are looking 2,000 years backward, and we happen to know the name of that singular seed. It was Jesus.

The more you can stay off social media today, the better off you will be, because you have all these people running around trying to say, "We are the seed of Abram, of Abraham. Galatians 3 says that, therefore God is through with Israel." They are not even paying attention to what Galatians 3 is saying. Galatians 3 is not saying that Israel's program is canceled. There is nothing in Galatians 3 that says, "Thus saith the Lord, 'God is done with Israel. He is completely working through the church now, the new Israel—replacement theology—supersessionism.'"

They have been bringing on these so-called theological experts onto the Tucker Carlson show, onto the Candace Owens show. Ron Paul, who is a congressman that I happen to agree with on a lot of different issues, like limited government things, is now bringing on people like Chuck Baldwin as some kind of expert. They are all using Galatians 3 to try to argue that Israel's program is canceled. In fact, that is not what Galatians 3 is talking about at all. There is not a word of cancellation in Galatians 3.

The only thing Galatians 3 is saying is that we are Abraham's seed in the sense that we are his spiritual seed, not physical, number one, but only in the sense that he was justified by faith alone, just like we are. He looked forward. We look backward. He did not know the name of the Messiah. We know His name. He got it on credit. We do not get it on credit. But other than that, there is commonality with Abraham and us. That is all Galatians 3 is trying to say.

If you had gone up to Paul and tried to argue, "Well, Paul, what you really mean here is that God is through with Israel nationally and the collective seed promises are canceled," do you know what Paul would have said? Ready for this? He would have said "'Me genoito' [μὴ γένοιτο]!" which means "May it never be!"

Paul deals with that argument in Romans 11—"Is God through with Israel?" "'Me genoito' [μὴ γένοιτο]! May it never be!" That is the strongest negation in the Greek language. It is like when your five-year-old grandson says, "Can I borrow the keys to the car?" You are not just saying "No." You are saying, "No, no, no, no!" You are saying, "May it never be!"

"Is God through with Israel?" "'Me ginoito' [μὴ γένοιτο]!" Do not use Galatians 3 to make it sound as though God is through with Israel, because that is not even what Paul is talking about. He is talking about how we are the spiritual seed of Abraham. The reason this is significant is that faith is the one thing that a lost human being can do before God which is not a work.

God always justifies people—Old Testament, New Testament, today, throughout history, going back to Adam and Eve—on the basis of faith alone. So this is how salvation works for us. We worked through John 3:14-15.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life"
(John 3:14-15).

This goes back to Numbers 21:4-9, the snake bites in the Transjordan, the nation of Israel grumbling against Moses. God says, "I have you covered here, Moses. I am going to bring snakes with poisonous venom against the nation of Israel, and they are going to start to die, these people that have grumbled against you."

As the people are being poisoned, they cry out to Moses for mercy, and Moses intercedes and goes before God. God says, "Here is the answer to the dilemma. Take a snake. Put it on a high pole so everyone can see it. You do not have to drag yourself in front of it. You can see it plainly. And anyone who just does a simple look at that snake on the pole will be miraculously spared from the poisonous bite of the snake."

That is how salvation in a temporal sense was done there in Israel's history. Jesus, when He quotes that passage to Nicodemus in John 3, says, "It works the same way with salvation."

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life"
(John 3:14-15).

I have a snakebite too, right? It is called original sin. I am dying too. I have the same kind of problem as the Israelites had, and I need a solution. The solution is that as Moses lifted up the snake on the pole, the Son of Man is going to be lifted up on the cross. If I will give a singular look His direction by way of faith, and at a split second in time place my trust in Him to help me with my snake bite, then just like that, I am saved. That is how simple salvation is. There is no complexity here whatsoever.

I have given you this quote from Robert Gromacki. I saw his son, by the way, at the pre-Trib conference, and I said, "Hey, I quoted your dad in my Sunday School lesson," and he knew exactly what book and probably the page number that I was using.

Robert Gromacki, a longtime professor of theology, Greek, and all that at Cedarville University, writes in his book "Salvation Is Forever,"

"How many times did the people have to look at the serpent to be healed? Just once. One look prompted by faith was enough. So it is with Calvary. How many times must one look at Christ in faith to be saved? Just once. The faith that heals or saves is an act, a completed event, not an attitude."⁷

That is the simplicity of salvation. Now, what we are moving into here is a verse that people use to discredit what I just said. They go to John 20:30-31. It says,

⁷ Robert Gromacki, *Salvation Is Forever* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1989), 88.

"Therefore many other signs Jesus performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31).

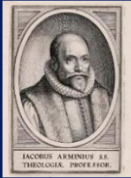
People come along and they say, "You know what? The Bible does not just say 'believe.' It says, 'believing.' So the moment you stop believing, stop trusting, is the moment you are not saved anymore. The moment you quit believing is proof that the faith that you have was never from above. It was just spurious faith, faith that disintegrates under adversity, faith that disintegrates under trial."

Calvinists sometimes correlate that with the performance of people. "I have not seen sister so-and-so or brother so-and-so at church lately. I guess they had the wrong kind of faith." So they say, "Well, they believed, but they are not believing. So they had the man-made faith, and not the faith that comes from God. They had what is called the illusory faith or the spurious faith."

These people line up to give you John 20:31 and any other verse that indicates that you do not just believe, but you have to keep believing. So because of the complexity of this, I have an outline that has eight parts to it.

John 20:30-31?

1. Present tense participle "believing" – John 3:16, 18; 5:24
2. Abuse of the present tense
3. Present tense does not always require continual behavior
4. Mark 6:14
 - a. John the "the one continually baptizing?"
 - b. John already dead!
 - c. Not describing continual baptizing
 - d. Just describing him
5. How many times do you have to **MURDER** before you are a **MURDERER**?
Once! Same with a **FISHERMAN & BELIEVER**



A small, square, black and white portrait of a man with a beard and a high-collared garment, identified as Jacobus Arminius. The portrait is set within a decorative frame. Below the portrait, the text "JACOBUS ARMINIUS A.E. THEOLOGICUS PRAESES FRIESEN" is visible.

We are dealing with the present tense participle "believing." You will find "believing" in John 3:16, 18; 5:24. The most prominent is John 20:30-31. This is the idea that a faith that dissolves is not real. Let's say it was a real trust you had in Christ, but it dissolved; you quit believing—Calvinists will say very quickly, "Well, that person was never a believer. They did not have the real kind of faith. They are not one of the elect."

Calvinists base this whole thing on the present tense participle, which supposedly indicates that faith continues on and on. The best and the brightest within evangelicalism teach this.

Here is a quote of Dan Wallace, a famous Greek professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. This is not just in his introductory Greek grammar. It is in his intermediate Greek grammar. So it must be true. This guy has all the pedigree of a Greek scholar. This is what he writes:

"The aspectual force of the present 'ho pisteuōn' seems to be in contrast with 'ho pisteusas' ['believe']..."⁸

In other words, "believing" seems to be in contrast with just "believe."

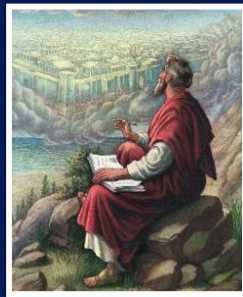
"The present was the tense of choice most likely because the NT writers by and large saw continual belief as a necessary condition for salvation. Along these lines, it seems significant that the promise of salvation is almost always given to 'ho pisteuōn' [present tense], almost never to 'ho pisteusas' ['believe']..."⁹

He says, "Look at the Greek. It says 'believing.'" So, like Robert Gromacki said, a singular look of faith is not enough. It has to be continuous. You can see how that fits with the Calvinistic belief system, because they teach that faith, if you have it at all, is really from God. It is a gift. We have refuted that exegetically earlier in the series.

What I would like to communicate to you is that Wallace (who has forgotten more about Greek than I will ever know) is abusing the present tense. He is making the present tense of the articular present participle "believing" into something that the present tense is not always communicating in Scripture. The present tense does not always require continual behavior. I have a list here of examples of this.

Present Tense Participle Does Not Always Mean Forever

- John 4:13
- John 4:26
- John 4:36
- John 5:3
- John 5:24
- John 6:14



- John 11:26-27
- Mark 6:14
- Mark 14:20
- Luke 16:18
- Gal. 3:13

Bob Wilkin, "The One Who Believes: Is Continuous Faith Required to be Born Again?,"
online: <http://www.faithalone.org/magazine/y2006/06jf1.html>, accessed 06 May 2015.

⁸ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 621, n. 22.

⁹ Ibid.

This list was compiled by Bob Wilkin. You can find his article online. It is entitled, "The One Who Believes: Is Continuous Faith Required to Be Born Again?"¹⁰

What we are trying to show is that what Wallace is doing with the present tense in John 20:30-31 he would never do anywhere else in the Bible.

Notice John 4:13-14. It is Christ's conversation with the woman at the well.

"Jesus answered and said to her, 'Everyone who drinks...' (John 4:13).

You should underline *""drinks""* (John 4:13), because all of these verses with words that I am telling you to underline are articular present tense participles, participles that are in the present tense with a definite article in front of them, exactly like in John 20:30-31.

"Jesus answered and said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life'" (John 4:13-14).

"So quit drinking from your well and drink from My well." That is what Jesus is saying. That is how He is analogizing faith. Now ask yourself this question: "When someone drinks from a well, do they drink forever?" Do they just sit there and "glug glug glug glug glug glug glug" and never come up for air? Of course not. The present tense does not communicate forever and ever here. So why would we automatically assume it means that in John 20:30-31?

Look at John 4:26, in the same chapter, continuing with this conversation with the woman at the well:

"Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am He'" (John 4:26).

Underline *""speak""* (John 4:26). That is an articular present tense participle.

"...'I who speak to you am He'" (John 4:26).

Did the conversation never end? Did Jesus just go on and on and on for eternity talking? Some people, you talk to them and you feel that way—"Is this person ever going to shut up?" You would never interpret the present tense that way. Obviously it was something happening in the present, but there was a termination point.

These are all examples from John's Gospel, from which Wallace and others are trying to build this case of continuous faith from the articular present tense participle in John 20. I am showing that Wallace would never treat any other articular present tense participle this way in the rest of John's Gospel, but for whatever reason he carves out a special exception in John 20.

¹⁰ <https://faithalone.org/grace-in-focus-articles/is-continuous-faith-required-to-be-born-again/>

Why is that? Because he has already bought into a theological system. His theology has overtaken his exegesis of the passage, something that Wallace rightly condemns, and usually does a pretty good job of it. But he sure lets his biases show here.

Notice John 4:36.

"Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together" (John 4:36).

It is talking about evangelism. You put a seed into the ground. You reap a harvest. You evangelize the lost. You have conversions that you can celebrate in this life and in the life to come. There "sows," referring to evangelism, is an articular present tense participle.

Now, does the evangelistic process continue on forever? No. There are some things in the next life that you cannot do—did you know that? One of the things you will not be able to do in the next life is to evangelize, because by the time we move into the eternal state, there is no more evangelism. Everyone's fate is sealed. So whatever evangelistic opportunities you have now, you should relish those, because those are not going to be around forever.

But if I were to interpret the articular present tense participle there the way Wallace is interpreting it in John 20, I would be saying that evangelism never stops, which obviously it does.

Go one chapter to the right. Look at John 5. Christ is going to heal somebody, the lame man who was in that condition for thirty-eight years, at the Pool of Bethesda. John 5:3 says,

"In these lay a multitude of those who were sick,..." (John 5:3).

Underline *"sick"* (John 5:3), because that is an articular present tense participle.

"...blind, lame, and withered [waiting for the moving of the waters;]" (John 5:3).

The articular present tense participle is used and is translated "sick" in English. That cannot mean that they are in that sickness forever, because Jesus is about to heal a guy. Therefore the present tense participle does not mean something continuous or forever.

In John 5:24, just a few verses further, Jesus says,

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).

Faith is only as good as the object it is placed in. You have to hear the truth. And when that word "hear" is used, that is an articular present tense participle. No one would interpret this verse as saying, "Well, you have to hear the gospel forever." We all understand that the presentation of it does not go on forever, because you have to go home and sleep at night, right?

There might be a wonderful presentation that you are hearing of the gospel, but you are not going to stay there forever hearing it, right? So if it does not mean something perpetual in John 5:24, why all of a sudden are you carving out an exception and making this theological point from John 20:30-31? Because your theology got in the way of what the biblical text actually says.

Of all people that should know better, you would think a Greek scholar would know better. I am not an anti-Dan-Wallace guy at all. I have tremendous respect for him. But man, this is where a major error just crept into our seminary textbooks. Why you are going to hear pulpits constantly saying that you had better keep believing is that they were trained under this man.

Let's go one chapter to the right. Go to John 6:14. Again, these are all examples from John's Gospel. John 6:14 says,

"Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, 'This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world'" (John 6:14).

Underline "come." That is an articular present tense participle. When Jesus came the first time, it was limited. He is not still coming, right? He will be coming one day, but the First Coming is over. He came, He accomplished His mission on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, and He left planet Earth through the ascension. He is currently seated at the Father's right hand.

The coming of Christ into the world is not describing something that just goes on and on and on forever, even though it is given there in the present tense.

Go to John 11:26-27.

"and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:26).

So to come to Christ, you have to live and believe. Now, can I ask you a question? Do people live forever in their mortal state? John 11:26 is saying, "Do you want to be a believer? You have to be alive, and you have to believe." "Lives" is an articular present tense participle. No one interprets that to mean "Boy, I had better hope I do not die, because I guess Jesus gave two criteria here." No one would interpret "lives" that way.

Go over to Mark 14, leaving John's Gospel, back a couple books. Go to Mark 14:20, which takes place in the Upper Room.

"And He said to them, 'It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl'" (Mark 14:20).

"So, Lord, which one of us is going to betray you?" "The one who dips with Me in the bowl. That is the guy who is going to betray me." And we all know who that was. That was Judas. "Dips" is an articular present tense participle. Does that mean that Judas, for the rest of his life, sat there and did this?

Think of the lactic acid build up in your hand as you are doing this over and over. Eventually, Judas dipped and then he left the room. Nobody understands this as something that goes on forever and ever.

Go over with me to Luke 16:18.

"Everyone who divorces his wife..." (Luke 16:18).

Underline "divorces." That is an articular present tense participle.

"Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery" (Luke 16:18).

When was the last time you heard a sermon series on that verse? My goodness. I am not going to preach one right now either. I am just going to show you that the word "divorces" is an articular present tense participle. I know divorce is painful, but could you imagine if it went on forever and ever? Obviously a divorce is something that is a legal situation, but at some point it ends.

Notice Galatians 3:13.

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE'—" (Galatians 3:13).

"Hangs" is an articular present tense participle. When Jesus was crucified on the cross, did He stay up there forever? He did not. The Jews had to get Him down as fast as they could because they were getting ready to celebrate Passover. So, as you know the story, they broke the legs of those crucified on either side of the other criminals.

They did not break Jesus' legs because He was already dead. They thrust the spear into His side and out came blood and water. They took Him down from the cross. They buried Him in a tomb, Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, which, by the way, fulfilled prophecy, because Isaiah, seven hundred years in advance, said that when Jesus the Messiah came, He was going to be buried in the tomb of a rich man. Wow, look at that. Pretty literal.

So when Galatians 3:13 says "hangs" it does not mean that Jesus hung up there forever—He did not. What I am saying is that it is understood that the present tense does not always mean something that goes on forever. So why do that in John 20:30-31? Why not have a footnote in the Greek grammar I was quoting explaining this to people? But they do not do that.

People are taught under this system and they go into the pulpits and they say, "Well, if your faith does not keep going, you do not have the real kind of faith." It is what I would call a theological reading of the Bible. It is reading the Bible through the system of Calvinism rather than building your theology from the Bible.

Now, here is the most egregious example of this. Look at Mark 6:14. If you remember none of these examples, just remember this one and you will see this for what it is. Mark 6:14 is speaking of the activity of John the Baptist:

"And King Herod heard of it, for His name had become well known; and people were saying, 'John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him'" (Mark 6:14).

Underline "the Baptist" because that is an articular present tense participle. It literally says "John the baptizing one." Now, did John the Baptist's baptizing activity never stop? Obviously not, because by this time the man is dead. You remember the story with Herod and all of that. His head was cut off. He is not baptizing anybody. And yet the present articular present tense participle calls him "John the baptizing one."

So obviously this is not saying that John the Baptist never quit baptizing, because you cannot baptize someone after you are dead. So this is not describing John's continual baptizing. The present tense is just used to describe who John was. It has no intimation here whatsoever that he never quit baptizing. So that is all the present tense participle means in John 20:30-31.

There are lots of linguistic tools that are used to describe "believe," but just because you see the present tense participle does not communicate some kind of unbroken chain. The only thing that God ever required was a look of faith, from the Numbers 21 example.

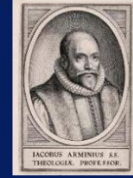
Here is the passage that I read earlier:

"And King Herod heard of it, for His name had become well known; and people were saying, 'John the Baptist [lexical form, "baptizō" (βαπτίζω); "baptizōn" (βαπτίζων), articular present tense participle] has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him'" (Mark 6:14).

It is just describing what John did. He baptized a lot of people. Mark happened to use the present tense there, but it is not communicating an unbroken chain, a continuous chain, an eternal chain that never stops.

John 20:30-31?

6. Does not preclude ongoing faith but does not require it
7. Other verb forms also used to describe belief (John 8:30-31)
8. It is possible for a Christian to struggle with faith
 - a. 2 Tim. 2:13 – “faithless” = unbelieving
 - b. Jas. 1:5-8
 - c. Peter’s sinking and three-fold denial
 - d. Luke 22:31-32
 - e. Is unbelief the unpardonable sin?



Let me ask you a question: How many times do you have to commit murder before you are a murderer? Just once. We call people that commit murder one time a murderer, don't we? "They are a murderer." "Well, how many times did they do it? I would not call them a murderer. They just did it once." Do you see how ridiculous that is? I am just using the present tense to describe what they did. That is how the Bible works.

How many times do you have to be a fisherman before you can be a fisherman? You just have to go once, don't you? So the truth of the matter is that is how language functions. When the Bible says "believing," it is just another way of describing what faith is like. It is not saying, "You had better not get cut short or you do not have the real kind of faith." That is a hijacking of the present tense.

Now, do not get me wrong. People hear this and they think it is heresy. Of course we would encourage you to keep believing, continuing. The Bible does not preclude ongoing faith. I hope that is the case in your life and in my life. The Bible does not preclude ongoing faith, but it does not require it for justification. The only thing that God requires is a singular look of faith.

Look, if I was setting up the standards, they would be a lot different. But God never consulted me when he set up his standards. He never said, "Hey, Andy, how do you feel about this?" I was not even on the radar screen—I did not even exist—when the standards of God came up. My only responsibility is communicating to you what God said.

Whatever you believe about Calvinism or Arminianism, I would just hold those things loosely in light of what God says. God's is whose opinion matters. The Bible does not preclude ongoing faith, but it does not require it for justification. It requires a singular look of faith (John 3:14-15, coming from Numbers 21:8-9).

What is interesting about this whole subject of faith is that the Bible uses lots of verb tenses to describe faith. For example, John 8:30-31 says,

"As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him." (John 8:30).

Now, "came to believe" is aorist active indicative.

"So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed in Him ["had believed" is a perfect active participle], 'If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;'" (John 8:31).

This is really important: continuing does not make you justified, but it makes you a disciple. That is completely different. A believer is someone who is not going to hell. A disciple is someone who, before the Bema Seat judgment of Christ, is going to be fully rewarded.

Continuation is not a requirement for justification, but it is a requirement for discipleship. If the present tense was such a big deal here, why didn't Jesus, or John, throw it in? Why didn't they throw in—"Oh, you had better keep believing"?

They do not do that, because in language you can describe something through all kinds of different verb tenses. You can use aorist active indicative. You could use a perfect active participle. You can use the present tense. But it is not some kind of ironclad requirement of ongoing faith to prove that you are justified. Now, if you want to walk in discipleship, that is different.

So is it possible for a Christian to struggle with faith? We will answer that next time.