

8 *Does Jesus Share Salvation Doctrine with Paul?*

Introduction

Did Jesus and Paul have any doctrine in common on salvation? Some cite Luke 7:47 and others John 3:16. The Lucan passage is infrequently cited as compared to John 3:16. Luke's passage is viewed as potentially being consistent with Paul while John's passage is widely thought to be the same as Paul's gospel message. However, on close scrutiny, even these two passages of Jesus are indeed in conflict with Paul's salvation theology. Let's see why.

Luke 7:47

Jesus encountered a woman who loved Him much, washing His feet with her tears. Jesus declares her sins forgiven. He tells us why in ways that when Paulinists look closely at the passage, they cringe. Can Jesus forgive someone because they love much, and not on faith alone? Nevertheless, we read in Luke 7:47:

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; **for she loved much**: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. (ASV).

The word-for-word translation of the literal Greek of the key phrase is: "released are her many sins **because** she loved much."¹

Commentators on the Greek who accept Paul's view of salvation are fraught with dismay. Adam Clarke states:

In the common translation her forgiveness is represented to be **the consequence of her loving much**, which is causing the tree to produce the root, and not the root the tree [*i.e.*, it would contradict Paul's views]. I have considered *ioe* here as having the sense of *aeioe*, therefore;... we must suppose her love was the effect of her being pardoned, not the cause of it.

However, to arrive at Adam Clarke's solution, you have to suppose a completely different Greek word is used to erase the causation between her *love* and Jesus' *forgiveness of sins*. Clarke *confesses* this by suggesting a different Greek word would convey the meaning that *fits Pauline doctrine*.

Moreover, on close examination, the Greek is clear. The Greek conjunction underlying "**for** she loved much" is *hoti*. Strong's #3754 says it means "causatively *because*" or can mean *that*. In this context, all the translations into English realize it has a *causative sense*. They render it *for*. Its more concrete synonym in English is *because*. The word *hoti* means *because* here, especially due to its clear placement in the sentence. To repeat, the literal Greek is: "released are her many sins **because** she loved much." Only the meaning *because* makes sense. The alternative meaning *that* would render the second part unintelligible.

Other commentators are so fraught with dismay they simply assert Jesus cannot mean what He says in Luke 7:47. Based on the presupposition of Paul's validity, they assert her great love was the "proof, not the reason for her forgiveness." (Robertson's *Word Pictures*.)

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1. A more literal translation would also render the introductory *charin* as "for this reason" rather than use the vague term *wherefore*: "For this reason I am saying to you released are her many sins because she loved [*aorist tense*] much; to whom few [sins] are being forgiven [present indicative] they love [present indicative] little."

Somewhere along the way, commentators learned the power of repetition. They realized that if you repeat often enough an alleged truth of Christianity from Paul that is actually contrary to what Jesus says, you can create a social pressure to affix Paul's teaching upon Christ's teaching. This works because the listener recognizes Paul's teaching. The Christian is trained to ignore, however, that there is a mismatch between the words of Paul and Jesus. The repetition of Paul's doctrine serves to thwart Jesus' teachings every time. This wears down the Christian's critical sense to *understand the clear meaning of words*. The Christian who is barraged by the drum-beat of *salvation by faith alone* no longer senses the contradiction by Paul of Jesus. Any person free from this barrage can easily read Jesus' words and see the linguistic impossibility that both Paul and Jesus are saying the same thing. Thus, this galvanizing thumping on Paul's salvation themes has glued in place an adherence to Pauline teachings that actually contradict Jesus. Any slight questioning of the paradigm leads to firm and loud accusation that one is *returning to Rome*. The poor soul who holds up Jesus' words against Paul's is to be branded a heretic. Thus, repetition and social pressure has nullified our sense of a loyalty to Christ that should trump our loyalty to Paul. For these Paulinists, questioning Paul's validity has become non-sense. They assume the scholars and theologians have worked out what they themselves take no time to study. Social conditioning thereby has made Paul's doctrine, not Jesus' teachings, something that must be protected *at all costs!* It is like brainwashing. You can hear it over and over, like a mantra.

The commentators' approach to solving the dilemma of Luke 7:47 is just one more example of this mantra. The Pauline commentators vigorously utter the textually-unsupportable notion that Jesus does not mean the love she had was the "cause of her remission" of sins. This would be *works* in addition to faith, they admit. *It just cannot be viewed that way, they insist*. Yet, the very reason they must insist this is what Jesus means is because what Jesus says plainly is that

her great love was part of the *causative* reasons her sins were forgiven. Jesus contradicts Paul. The only way to save Paul is to repetitiously insist Jesus' words do not mean what they literally mean.

As a result of this torture of Jesus' words, the Pauline interpretation of this passage is that Jesus meant she was forgiven for no particular reason other than faith. Of course, Jesus gave faith a role too in her salvation. "Thy faith has saved you." (Luke 7:50.) However, seeing *faith* as the sole reason for her forgiveness is wilful self-delusion. One is squeezing out of the passage only the one part that sounds like Paul. You are ignoring the *causative* statement glaring back at you that contradicts Pauline doctrine: "Released are her many sins *because* (hoti) she loved much." (Luke 7:47.)

The Uniqueness of Luke 7:50 in the Synoptics

What is most interesting is that in all of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), this is ***the only passage where Jesus goes on to say someone is saved by faith***. Jesus next says to the woman (Luke 7:50):

And he said unto the woman, ***Thy faith hath saved thee***; go in peace.

Yet, to repeat, the Greek is unmistakable that her love mixed with faith were the *causative* elements in "forgiveness" and "salvation." Jesus says she was forgiven and saved ***because*** "she loved much" and had "faith." Faith alone did not save this young woman!

We have more to say below on the strange fact that this is the ***only time in the Synoptic Gospels*** that faith is mentioned as having any *positive* role in salvation. As you can see, however, in this one example, it is faith and love in mixture that Jesus says leads to her forgiveness and being saved.

What About Faith in the Synoptics?

Faith is barely mentioned in Matthew, Mark and Luke. They are also known as the *Synoptic Gospels*. The special purpose of John's Gospel and why *believing* is so often mentioned awaits discussion below.

One Paulinist confesses the Synoptics are anti-Paul, but then provides an odd explanation:

Ever notice that the first three gospels (the synoptic gospels) **never explicitly speak of salvation through faith in Christ** (except for [the non-canonical] Mark 16:16).² In fact in those gospels when Jesus is asked the question, 'What must I do to have eternal life?' he responds with the Law—a **performance based concept of righteousness**. [It is not] the gospel of grace which is a faith based righteousness, which is...found in Paul's writings [such] as in Romans. Why the difference?

I infer that the synoptic gospels were primarily to prepare people to hear the gospel of grace, **rather than actually presenting the gospel message explicitly**.³

There is a much more likely reason the Synoptics are antagonistic to Paul's doctrines than the reason this Paulinist suggests. It is so self-evident that it is startling it is never considered: the Synoptics were written *specifically* to counter the message of Paul!

The fact nothing in them confirms Paul's gospel of grace is startling *in its historical context*. Paul's many letters certainly were in circulation for at least 10-20 years continu-

2. For a discussion on the erroneous addition of Mark 16:16, see page 29.

3. *The Message: Attitudes of Faith* (Boston Christian Bible Study Resources: 2004) at <http://www.bcbsr.com/topics/fj7.html> (last accessed 2005).

ously *prior* to Matthew, Mark and Luke having been written. Standard dating of Mark is as early as 65 A.D. The Hebrew Matthew could be in the same vicinity. Luke was written between 64 and 85 A.D.⁴ By comparison, Paul's letters date from the 40s through the 60s. Paul's writings were clearly in circulation for as much as twenty years when the Synoptics were written.

Yet, how strange that Matthew and Mark provide absolutely no confirmation of Paul's salvation-by-faith message! There is not a single passage in Matthew or Mark that links faith to salvation in a causal sense. This is true too of Luke, Paul's own companion.⁵ The only half-exception is in Luke where the woman who bathes Jesus' feet in tears. Jesus says her "faith has saved her." However, as already noted, even there Luke's research led him to a passage that Jesus links both her "great love" and "faith" to salvation and forgiveness, not faith alone. (See Luke 17:47-50, and discussion page 157 *et seq.*)

Thus, as surprising as this may sound, if you look only at the Synoptic Gospels (*i.e.*, Matthew, Mark & Luke), ***Jesus actually never says that you obtain eternal life by faith alone.*** The only time faith is given a causal role, the

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4. For a defense of early dating and discussion of standard dates, see John A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (SCM Press: 1976).
5. Faith plays almost no role to mention in the synoptics. The only time it is described causing something is when Jesus heals people. He says "your faith has made you whole." (Matt. 9:22; Mark 5:34, 10:52, Luke 8:48, 17:19, 18:42.) We read what this means when Jesus says: "according to your faith let it be done unto you." (Matt. 9:29.) Otherwise, faith is not linked causally to anything. See Matt. 8:10, Luke 7:9 ("I have not found so great faith"); Matt. 8:26, 14:31, 16:8, 17:20, Luke 12:28 ("Oh ye of little faith"); Matt. 9:2, Mark 2:5, Luke 5:20, ("seeing their faith"); Matt. 15:28 ("great is thy faith"); Matt. 21:21, Luke 17:6 ("If you have faith and doubt not..." "if you had faith..."); Matt. 23:23 ("weightier matters... faith"); Mark 4:40, Luke 8:25 ("have you not faith?" "where is your faith?" (storm on the Galilee); Mark 11:22 ("have faith in God" in relation to prayer); Luke 17:5 ("increase our faith"); Luke 18:8 ("shall he find faith"); Luke 22:32 (prayed "your faith fail not").

young woman is forgiven and saved “for she loved much” *and* had “faith.” (Luke 7:47-50.) Faith and love are mixed. They were the causative elements in her forgiveness and salvation, according to Jesus. Thus, rarely, if ever, does anyone look at the Synoptics for support of Paul’s doctrine of salvation by faith, let alone his ideas of salvation by faith alone.

The Synoptics’ Doctrine on Works Proves Its Agenda on Paul

What demonstrates beyond doubt that the Synoptics were designed to prove Paul as a false apostle is their strong emphasis on salvation by works beyond mere faith. As one author puts it, in the Synoptics, the “main path to salvation that [Jesus] described is based on good works and attitudes.”⁶

In fact, in the Synoptics, the point is that mere faith without works is useless. There is no countervailing Pauline concept that if you *once believed* this somehow excuses or satisfies the requirement of repentance from sin, good works, and obedience to the Ten Commandments to enter “eternal life.” For example:

- See Matthew 25:31-46 (the sheep who do charity go to heaven; those goats who refuse go to hell).
- See Matt. 19:17 and Luke 10:25-27 (Jesus’ answer how to have eternal life starts with keeping the Law, quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18).
- See Matt. 5:20 (your righteousness must exceed the Pharisees to enter the kingdom of heaven which Jesus then defines as not cursing, lusting, etc.).
- See Matt. 16:2 (Son of Man will come and “reward each according to his works”).
- See Mark 9:42-48 (better to cut off a body part causing you to sin and enter heaven maimed than to not repent of sin and go to hell whole).

6. *SALVATION: According to the synoptic gospels* reprinted at http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_savj1.htm (last visited 2005).

- See Matt. 25:14-30 (servants who produce fruit are saved; the servant who produced no fruit is “unprofitable” and thrown outside where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth; *cf.* Matt. 13:42 the ensnared are thrown into the “fiery furnace” where there is weeping and gnashing).
- See Matt. 13:3-23 & Luke 8:5-15 (those who “believe for a while” but in time of temptation fall away or who are choked and bring no fruit to completion are lost, but the one who in a good and noble heart brings forth fruit to completion in patient endurance is saved).

What About John’s Gospel?

If we look at the context of John’s very different recollections than those in the Synoptics, we will see the Apostle John had the same secondary objective as the Synoptics: to address the question of Paul.

What About Faith in John’s Gospel?

Luther once said that the “science of theology is nothing else but Grammar exercised on the words of the Holy Spirit.”⁷ Luther is correct that deciphering the Bible’s meaning must start with the grammar of each particular verse. If you have the wrong grammatical construction, you do not have the *intended meaning*. Thus, for example, the correct meaning of John 3:16 is dependent on having the correct grammatical understanding of the verse.

If you look at John 3:16, when properly translated, it is not about salvation by faith. It is about endurance. It is about Matthew 10:22: “He who endures to the end shall be

7. Johann Brecht Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament* (ed. A. Fausset) (trans. J. Bandinel, J. Bryce, W. Fletcher)(Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1866) at 1.44 (quoting Luther), as quoted in Alan J. Thompson, “The Pietist Critique of Inerrancy? J.A. Bengel’s *Gnomon* as a Test Case,” *JETS* (March 2004) at 79.

saved.” In fact, all of John’s Gospel uses the Greek present active verb tense for *pisteuo*, meaning he who *continues to believe/trust*. The theme of John is that trust must endure for salvation to be realized, not that a one-time faith saves.

One can easily see this by reading *Young’s Literal Translation* of John’s Gospel. Young renders each Greek present active participle of *believe* as “is believing.” (John 1:12; 3:15,16,18,36; 5:24; 6:35,40,47; 7:38; 11:25-26; 12:11, 37, 44, 46; 14:12; 17:20.)⁸ The form *is believing* is known as the English Present Continuous Tense of *believe*.

For an extensive explanation why *Young’s Literal* reads this way, it is in Appendix A: *Greek Issues*. (A short synopsis will appear below.)

Thus, all these verses in John’s Gospel have been mistranslated in the KJV and NIV to be talking about salvation caused by a one-time verbal or mental acknowledgment (*believes*) of Jesus as savior. This translation matched Paul’s salvation formula in Romans 10:9. Paul used the Greek *arist* tense for *believes* in Romans 10:9, which corresponds to a one-time faith. However, John’s literal words in the continuous tense—the Greek *present active tense*—have nothing to do with a one-time action—the Greek *arist tense*. The meaning of John 3:16 is in the true translation of the verb tense: *continues to believe* or *trust*. All who keep on trusting in Jesus “should” be saved, says John 3:16.⁹ It is about endurance in trust, not salvation by faith.

In fact, one could interpret John’s gospel as being intentionally anti-Pauline.

For consider that when you compare John to the Synoptics (*i.e.*, Matthew, Mark & Luke), Jesus never utters any statement in the Synoptics comparable to John about *faith*. Why was John summoning this message about *pisteuo* from

8. To verify the Greek verb’s grammatical usage, download the *Interlinear Scripture Analyzer* free on the Internet.

9. For the explanation why the KJV “should,” and not the NIV “shall have eternal life” is correct, see Footnote 15 on page 383.

his memory with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? Precisely because Paul had made such a big focus on faith. Paul's influence was growing although not as significant as we all assume.¹⁰ The Synoptics had not enough impact on the budding church to expose the stark difference between Paul and Jesus. Some Christians were still persuaded that Paul had the true gospel. Thus, John's gospel was the Holy Spirit's inspiration to John to fix this, by showing Jesus' true doctrines on faith and believing.

In other words, John was remembering all the times Jesus used the word *pistis* or its relative *pisteuo* (the verb form, *to believe* or *trust*) when *linked* somehow to eternal life. (Of course, Jesus spoke in Aramaic or Hebrew, but John was translating to Greek.) This way we could make a comparison between Jesus and how Paul uses the similar word in relation to salvation. No one has offered a more reasonable explanation why John reads so differently than the Synoptics. There was something pressuring John. It was the question of Paul.

Thus, John must have asked the Holy Spirit to call to his mind every instance Jesus mentioned faith as somehow causally related to salvation. This way we could examine Paul's teaching in this regard. This produced a Gospel with a very different set of recollections which were not as *important* to the original Gospel writers.

How John's Gospel Addresses the Issue of Faith & Salvation

So how does John answer the key question whether a one-time faith or a one-time confession saves as Paul teaches in Romans 10:9? Does John back Paul up? Or does John expose Paul as a false teacher?

10. See *Paul or James' Church: Who Was The Most Successful Evangelist?* (Available exclusively online at www.jesuswordsonly.com.)

The answer is amazing. Everywhere that *faith/trust* is mentioned as causally connected to eternal life in the Gospel of John, it is in a verb form of the present active in Greek. (See John 3:16, 5:24, 6:35, 37, 40, 47 *etc.*) Every time!

Thus, John's Gospel is repetitious on the issue of salvation. This is for emphasis by John. He could not recall it once said *any other way*. What does this imply?

A short synopsis follows which summarizes the discussion in Appendix A. Greek grammar makes John's point unmistakable.

Synopsis of Appendix A on the Greek Present Active

First, unlike English, Greek has a specific verb tense for a one-time action. It is known as the *aoiist* tense. This can be rendered in English by use of the English Simple Present Tense, *e.g.*, "believes." We can read "believes" in English to mean a one time expression of faith.¹¹ English Simple Present Tense thus can *correspond to the aoiist participle* in Greek.

Paul in Romans 10:9 uses the *aoiist* tense to signify salvation is by one time events: "if ever (*ean*) you confess (*aoiist active subjunctive*) by your mouth that Jesus is Lord and [if] you [ever] believe (*aoiist active subjunctive*) that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." (This is my literal word-for-word translation.) Thus, Paul is using the Greek *aoiist* verb tense. He means you are saved if you ever once confess and believe. No continuity is implied in verse nine.

11. For this reason, Charles Stanley, the head of the Baptists, says "believes" in John 3:16 (which is the KJV and NIV translation) 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. (Charles Stanley, *Eternal Security of the Believer* (Nelson: 1990) at 95.)

By contrast, in Greek, the *exact opposite* meaning from the *aorist* 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.¹² For example, “he who continues to believe” or “he who keeps on trusting” is the better translation.

This distinction is confessed by leading Calvinists who are staunch Paulinists. Dr. James White is a well-respected Calvinist. He writes about the verb tense in John 6:35-45 in his book *Drawn by the Father: A Summary of John 6:35-45* (Reformation Press: 1999) at pages 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.

12. See Appendix A: *Greek Issues* for a full discussion. Young’s Literal Translation always renders the Greek present indicative active or the present participle active with “is...ing” (the gerund form of the verb). This is the English present continuous tense. It is a satisfactory rendering. 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.

However, this is news to most Christians. The King James Version of the Bible (KJV) was primarily a production of Calvinist Puritans. The KJV always rendered the Greek present active tense with the English Simple Present Tense (*i.e.*, “believes”) rather than the English Continuous Present (*i.e.*, “is believing” or “keeps on believing”). The KJV thus conveyed a completely *opposite* meaning than John intended. The KJV English translation corresponds to the Greek *aorist* tense of Romans 10:9, not the Greek *present active tense* of Apostle John. The KJV corresponds to a teaching of a one-time faith should save rather than an ongoing trust doing so.

The KJV was either protecting Paul from the implication of John's gospel or committed a gross blunder. The New International Version (NIV) fixed the KJV translation of the Greek present active in over seventeen instances by adding to the verb clause “keeps on” or “continues to” each time. The only principal time the NIV would not correct the translation of the Greek present active was when the Greek word for *believes* was involved.¹³ The NIV left us still in the dark on the most important doctrine of all: salvation. There is no defense for this inconsistency.

The NIV thereby held back the true meaning of John 3:16 is *keeps on* or *continues to believe/trust*. The NIV was unwilling to inform us that John *contradicts* Paul. We are actually being misled by the NIV to believe John was agreeing with Paul that a one-time faith saves! If this were true, John in John 3:16 would have used the *aorist* tense just as Paul does in Romans 10:9. It did not happen.

When the translation is repaired, other verses in John take on diametrically different meanings as well. For example, another Paulinist favorite is John 5:24. Instead of a one-time faith causing you to have passed from death to life, it now depends on *continuous* trust on your part. John 5:24 correctly translated reads:

13. See Appendix A: *Greek Issues* for a full discussion at page v.

I keep telling you (*present active indicative*) the one who keeps on listening (*present participle active*) to my teaching and keeps on believing (*present participle active*) in the one who sent me (*aorist active participle*) keeps on having (*present active indicative*) eternal life and does not come (*present middle deponent*) into condemnation but has departed (*perfect active indicative*) out of death into life.

You can verify the verb tenses by downloading the free *Interlinear Scripture Analyzer*.

Thus, while Paul says a one-time (*aorist*) belief in certain facts saves you (Romans 10:9) and now there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1), a contrary meaning arises from John 5:24. There is no *condemnation* for those who *keep on* listening to Jesus and who *keep on* trusting/believing in the Father. In other words, John is remembering words of Jesus *at total odds* with Paul. Yet, our KJV and NIV lead us to believe there is agreement between Paul and Jesus by using in John 5:24 *hears* and *believes*. These are in the English Simple Present form. They are not in the English Continuous Present. Both the KJV and NIV translations use a tense that corresponds to Paul's *aorist* tense in Romans 10:9, not John's actual *present active* tense. It is completely obvious when you peak under the covers and look at the verb tenses. Now anyone can do this by using the *Interlinear Scripture Analyzer* free for download. The emperor has no clothes any more.

If you are tempted to throw out John's Gospel now that you know its intent is anti-Pauline, it is pointless to do so. You would also have to get rid of Luke. For the verb *pisteuo* was used in the same manner as John in Luke's account of the Parable of the Sower. Jesus in this account uses *believing* in the identical manner as in John's Gospel. For in Luke, Jesus identifies a *believing* that continues for a time but then stops. Jesus indicates this person becomes withered, apostate and lost. Luke, like John, viewed a faith/trust that continues as essential to salvation. We discuss this next.

*What The Parable of the Sower Confirms
About Faith in John's Gospel*

The Parable of the Sower is the only other passage in the Synoptics that talks about faith and salvation, but does so in a *negative manner*. The Parable of the Sower teaches that the failure to continue in *faith* or *trust* leads to becoming lost. It never says faith that later fails saves. In fact, the only person saved among the seeds is the one who *produces fruit to completion*. Thus, in this parable Jesus addresses faith and works in a way totally at odds with Paul. Now please note this is not a parable that Paulinists can avoid by claiming its meaning remains a mystery. Jesus explained its symbolic meaning in *excruciating detail*.

Let's analyze with care the Parable of the Sower.

The first seed never believes because Satan snatches the word from his heart before he can believe "and be saved." (Luke 8:12.) Unlike the first seed, the second seed (*i.e.*, the seed on rocky soil) (Luke 8:6) "sprouted." Jesus explains this means the second seed "received the word with joy" and "*believes for a while*." (Luke 8:13.)

In Luke 8:13, the Greek tense for "believes" is the present indicative active of *pisteuo*. Jesus is saying the seed on rocky ground "*keeps* on believing." Jesus then adds an adverb meaning "for a while." In this context, the present indicative is indistinguishable from the present participle active of *pisteuo* which is used uniformly in John's Gospel.¹⁴

14. The Greek word for *believes* in Luke 8:13 is *pisteuosin*. This is one form of the present participle active when a masculine dative is involved. *Pisteuosin* is also a present indicative active if the subject is a third person plural. (Walcott-Hort online at *Perseus.com*.) The subject pronoun in 8:13 is *hoi*, a masculine plural noun. Thus, *believes* in Luke 8:13 is the present indicative active. By comparison, *believe* in John 3:16 is *pisteuon*, which is the present participle active because the subject is a masculine nominative. This difference in *believes* between Luke 8:13 and John 3:16 is not substantive. Both correspond to a continuous tense. See Appendix A: *Greek Issues*.

Logically, if the first seed would have been “saved” had Satan not prevented faith from forming, this second seed must be “saved.” Thus, Jesus is saying the second seed is “saved” for a while because it believed for a while yet the first seed is never saved because it never believed.

Jesus goes on to say the second seed then “withered away” (*i.e.*, shriveled up). (Luke 8:6). Jesus explains this means it fell into “temptation” (sinned) and “fell away.” (Luke 8:13, *aphistami*.) Why did it fall away? It shriveled up “because it lacked moisture.” (Luke 8:6.) The Greek of this verb was present active as well, meaning “it did not continue to have moisture.” Jesus explains again why, saying the seed “did not have root.” (Luke 8:13.) The verb, however, is again present active in Greek (*ecousin*) and means “it **did not keep holding** on to the Root.”

TABLE 4. Parable of the Sower: Second Seed

Second Seed Metaphor	Jesus' Explanation
sprouted	received the word with joy continued to believe for a while
did not continue to have moisture	did not keep holding to the root
withered away (shriveled up)	tempted, fell away

Thus, Jesus is saying that someone who received the word with Joy, “continued to **believe** for a while,” and thus “sprouted,” then fell into temptation. This person ends up withered away (dead). Dead means no life. No life means no eternal life. The reason is they “did not keep holding to the Root” and so they “fell away.” This was a lesson about faith lacking endurance and being destroyed by sin (temptation). Thus, it is a negative message about faith. ***It is not an example of faith saving, but how faith can be brought to naught by sin.***

What was the warning Jesus intended in this parable? Keep holding on to the Root. Jesus is the Root. Hold to Jesus' words and you will not fall into temptation (sin). Let go and

you are opposite of the saints who “keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” (Rev. 14:12.) By falling into temptation you fail to “keep...the commandments...and faith of Jesus” and become lost.

There is no missing this point if you see the precise parallel to Revelation 2:4-5.

There Jesus tells the Ephesians they have “left your first love,” and “art fallen,” so “repent” and do your “first works.”

Compare this then to the second seed in the Parable of the Sower. The second seed had “joy” in the word at first, like the Ephesians had “love at first.” The second seed “sprouted” and thus had “first works,” just like the Ephesians. The second seed then sinned and “fell away,” just as the Ephesians “art fallen.” The solution, as always, is “repent,” as Jesus told the Ephesians in Revelation 2:4-5 and do your “first works.”

Now who is the only saved person in the Parable of the Sower? It is the fourth seed, which is the only one who brings forth *fruit* or...dare I use the synonym...works.

The fourth seed is the good and noble heart that is saved. To understand the fourth seed, we must see the contrast to the third seed. The KJV says the third seed “brings no fruit to perfection.” (Luke 8:14, KJV.) However, the translation is lacking. The third seed is choked by thorns (*i.e.*, the worries of this world) and so does not *telesphorousin*. This Greek word combines *teleos*, which means *end*, with *phore*, which means *to produce, bring forth*. Together, the two words literally mean “to complete” or “bring to a finish.” *Telesphore* is often used with regard to fruit, pregnant women or animals. (*Robertson's Word Pictures*.) *Telesphorousin* is the present active form in Greek. So it means “did not keep on producing to the end” or “did not continue to the finish.” The idea of “bringing fruit to *perfection*” is incorrect. The word “fruit” is also not actually in this verse. Completion, not perfection, is in view. They did not *telephorousin*, *i.e.*, they did not keep on producing to completion. They were choked off. This is reminiscent of the Sardisians whom Jesus tells in Revelation 3:3

that their works are “not fulfilled,” *i.e.*, incomplete. (*Cfr.* KJV “works not perfect”). Failure to complete your works leads to a loss of salvation.

Knowing the flaws of the third seed opens our understanding of the fourth seed’s reason for being saved. The fourth seed, by contrast, “fell into good ground, and grew, and brought forth fruit a hundredfold.” (Luke 8:8.) Listen to Jesus’ explanation of why this person alone among the four is ultimately saved:

And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and **bring forth fruit with patience.** (Luke 8:15 ASV).

The Greek verb for “hold it fast” is in the Greek present active again. It means “keep on holding down.” It is not hold “fast,” but hold “down.” (*Robertson’s Word Pictures.*) This is a significant point. As Jesus tells the parable, the devil swooped down and stole the word from the first sown seed, depriving it of salvation. By continuing to hold down the word, the fourth seed is guarding itself. It is doing everything possible to keep Satan from snatching the word away. It is the same meaning behind John 8:51. He who has “kept guard” over Jesus’ word “should never [ever] taste death.” (John 8:51, ASV.)

Finally, what does it mean that the only saved person in this parable “brings forth fruit with patience.” (Luke 8:15, ASV)? Salvation depends on completing works to the end.

Luke 8:15 really means: “who keep carrying on producing fruit with endurance.” The Greek verb this time is *karpos* (carrying) combined with *phore* (produce, bear) in the Greek present indicative. So it has a continuous meaning. This is followed by *hupomeno* in Greek. In most translations of this verse, *hupomeno* is rendered as *patience*. However, almost everywhere else *hupomeno* appears in the NT it is translated as *endurance*, which is the more likely intended meaning of Jesus. The combination of *karpos* and *phore*

implies fruit-bearing by definition. This parallels Luke 8:8 which mentions “fruit a hundredfold.” Thus, literally, Jesus is saying the saved seed “keeps carrying on producing fruit with endurance.” This is in sharp contrast with the third seed which was lost because it did not “continue to the finish” or “produce to completion.” (Luke 8:14.)

So let's build a diagram of the saved person in the Parable of the Sower.

TABLE 5. Parable of the Sower: Fourth Seed

Fourth Seed (The Saved)	Jesus' Explanation
good ground	noble and good heart
seed sewn	heard the word
grew	kept holding the word down (protecting it)
keeps on producing fruit a hundredfold	keeps on carrying on producing fruit with endurance. <i>Cfr.</i> third seed fails to produce to the finish

Here is Jesus' salvation formula in a nutshell. Producing fruit is never optional. Fruitlessness and being choked are pictures of the lost, even including those who “kept on believing for a while” and who “received” the word with joy at first. In fact, Jesus' point is even more adamant than just that: Jesus is saying partial fruitfulness is not enough. Jesus portends gloom for the one who has growth and then is choked off by thorns. Your initial good works are forgotten if you do not finish and complete well. Instead, you must endure to the end to be saved. This is an echo of Matthew 10:22 once more. It is reminiscent of Ezekiel 33:12. Salvation by faith alone is clearly refuted. Salvation by works alone is not approved either. However, salvation by endurance in good works to the end is crucial besides faith. So says the Lord Jesus Christ.

To hold onto Pauline ‘faith alone’ doctrine, one has to do many twists and turns with this parable. Jesus explained it, so you cannot say it is a parable *hard to understand*. Jesus already explained it!

Luther Could Not Come Up With A Gloss To Solve the Parable of the Sower

In fact, no one has ever properly explained how Jesus’ Parable of the Sower can even remotely line up consistent with Paul. Luther’s effort is so untenable that it proves how absolutely impossible it is to reconcile the two. Luther must have realized Jesus contradicts Paul. Thus, he injects Paul’s doctrine of faith, not works, into what saves the second seed. Luther then ignores how this mismatches the rest of what the parable means.

Luther begins his commentary properly. The first type who has their seed snatched are those who “hear the word” but do not understand it. (*Sermons of Martin Luther*, Vol. II, at 114.)¹⁵ These “never believe” and never become saved. (*Id.*, at 115.)

Luther then says the second seed knows the correct doctrine of salvation, *i.e.*, “they know the real truth” that they are saved by “faith without works” (Paul’s Gospel). However, “they do not persevere.” He adds: “when it comes to the test that they must suffer harm, disgrace and loss of life or property, then they fall and deny it....in times of persecution they deny or keep silence about the Word.”

Luther in essence is saying that they lose their salvation because under pressure they deny this truth that salvation is by faith alone. This is a bizarre self-contradiction. If you

15. Martin Luther, “The Parable of the Sower,” *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther* (Minneapolis, MN: Lutherans in All Lands, 1906) Vol. 11 reprinted as *The Sermons of Martin Luther* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House) (1983) Vol. II at 113 *et seq.*

can lose your salvation by losing faith in the principle of faith alone, then faith alone does not save you. You must *endure* or *persevere* in the doctrine of faith alone or be lost. This is a self-contradiction, because then faith alone did not save you. Faith and ***perseverance in faith alone*** saves you. These two ideas are self-contradictory: if you must persist in faith to be saved, then *persistence*, not the faith alone, is necessary for salvation. Hence, Luther's solution is nonsensical. (Anyone who has read eternal security arguments know that they reject Luther's argument precisely because salvation then depends on more than a one-time faith. Luther is actually contradicting Paul to save Paul from the Parable of the Sower.)

Luther's comments on the third group are enlightening as well. This group of seeds "always possess the absolutely pure Word..." (*Id.*, at 116.) Their fault is "they do not ***earnestly*** give themselves to the Word, but become ***indifferent*** and sink in the cares, riches and pleasures of this life..." (*Id.*, at 117.) They are thus apparently initially saved. Luther says "these have all in the Word that is needed for their salvation, but they do not make any use of it, and they rot in this life in carnal pleasures." Luther seems to understand Jesus is saying their problem is sin, not lack of proper faith. Luther says that despite the proper knowledge of the Gospel, "they do not bring under subjection their flesh." (*Id.*)

This leads Luther to the correct conclusion why the fourth seed is saved. Luther says they "bring forth fruit with patience, those who hear the Word and *steadfastly retain it*, meditate upon it and *act in harmony with it*." This leads to as true a statement as you will ever hear by Luther:

Here we see why it is no wonder there are so few true Christians, for all the seed does not fall into good ground, but only the fourth and small part; and that they are ***not to be trusted who boast they are Christians*** and praise the teaching of the Gospel. *Id.* at 118.

Luther realizes that salvation depends in the Parable, as Jesus depicts it, on *YOU!* It depends on the earnestness of *your response and productivity!*

This is the end of Luther's substantive commentary. What did he do? He explained Jesus' parable correctly. Yet, he pretended it was consistent with Paul by injecting Paul's gospel as what saved the second and third seeds initially. Luther did so without acknowledging it was self-contradictory nonsense. How can a seed that is saved by faith alone have to persevere and not succumb to sin? How can it lose salvation by being overcome by the thorns (pleasures) of this life? Nor did Luther try to ever explain away why the saved fourth seed alone had completed works.

Luther's response is a perfect example of how people retain Paul even when he contradicts Jesus. Luther is conceding certain unavoidable aspects of this parable are at direct odds with Paul. Yet by injecting Paul's wording in the middle, Luther makes it appear that Jesus' words are compatible with Paul's words. In this manner, Luther has somehow rationalized away that a conflict exists.

It is as Isaiah prophesied: "the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." (Isaiah 29:14.)

Comparing the Parable of the Sower to John's Gospel

Finally, now we can make a comparison between the Parable of the Sower and John's Gospel.

John and Luke use *pisteuo* in the present active verb form to make the same point about faith. In Luke, saving faith cannot be a seed that fails to "keep holding onto the Root." Thus, the Parable of the Sower and John have the identical concept of faith that pertains to salvation: it must continue. It must endure. If the believer fails to keep enduring to the end, he or she will become lost. ***Faith in the gospels is thus frequently portrayed as tenuous:*** as something that is insuffi-

Conclusion

cient alone, can fail, is ruined by sin, and that exhortations are necessary to remind us to endure in bringing forth fruit *to the end*.

Conclusion

The Parable of the Sower is an amazing nugget of Jesus' doctrine. For here is the whole *true* gospel of salvation from Jesus' lips. It is all contained in a very unassuming Parable of the Sower. Jesus tells you how to be saved and what is necessary to complete your salvation. Jesus tells you also how to be lost even after you have faith and accepted His word with joy and experience initial growth ("sprouted").

Accordingly, the Parable of the Sower puts an end to the salvation by faith alone idea. It puts an end to the idea that producing fruit is not essential. It shows the folly of thinking you can get to heaven having believed and withered, or having grown significantly and then having been choked, never bringing your works to completion.

Thus Jesus in this parable shows the error of Paul's starkly different doctrine. If you read Paul, ***it is all over once the seed is successfully sown***, no matter what happens next. Paul's main salvation verses at odds with this Parable of the Sower are well-known:

- Romans 3:28 ("man is justified by faith apart from observing the law").
- Romans 4:5 ("To the man who does not work, but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness").
- Gal. 5:4 ("You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace").
- Romans 7:6 ("Now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law, so that we serve in a new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code").
- Gal. 2:16 ("A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ, because by observing the law no one will be justified").

- Ephesians 2:8-9 (“For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith, this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.”)

Paul has a *different voice* than our Lord Jesus. Paul’s themes are *alien* to Jesus’s message of salvation. They undercut, if not destroy, the message of Jesus. The true sheep of Jesus *recognize* His voice, and will not follow another. (John 10:27-29.) Who are you following?

Thus, how many times must Jesus make the same points about repentance from sin and productivity at odds with Paul’s *different message* before we will listen? If we think the Parable of the Sower is some distorted addition to Scripture, then think again. It appears in all three Synoptic gospels. (Matt. 13:3 *et seq*; Luke 8:5 *et seq*; Mark 4:3 *et seq*.) There is no lineage of any early manuscript that ever omitted it. You have to deal with Jesus’ Words alone versus Paul’s different message.

The fact we cannot find Paul’s gospel in Jesus’ words brings us back to the fundamental questions presented in this book:

- When will we finally make a commitment to keeping Jesus’ words only?
- What is our *Biblical* justification for adding Paul to Scripture?
- What fulfilled prophecy did Paul give?
- Even if Paul gave a valid prophecy, does Paul seek to seduce us from following the Law and thus is disqualified from being added to Scripture by virtue of the Law’s strict *disqualification* rule in Deuteronomy 4:2 and 13:1-5 and Isaiah 8:20?